

Multi-Perspective, Culturally Responsive Students Within Experiential Education

Paradigms:

A Case Study of Select Programmes in Samoa

PhD Dissertation

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8 February 2013

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Dedication

To my father...this is what I meant when I told you I wanted to be far enough away to be free of it... so far that I have managed to meet you again and again in these new places, even after your death. I love you.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I acknowledge my mother. She has continued to be open about the issues and celebrations she faced when trying to raise a multiracial, multicultural daughter in America... even if the only real issue was my narrow belief and subsequent creation of a box of perceptions it took far too long to unlock. I have never met strength, patience or grace quite like hers. (Thank you for letting me liberally borrow from all three pots. I love you).

My heartfelt thanks extended to my unofficial supervisor and “co-captain” of my research journey- since I was an undergraduate! Jackie Fa’asisila has been an amazing force in my life. (Thank you for showing me how to give and learn from teaching in an experiential education program. You are a trailblazer without even knowing it, a testament to the power of cultural immersion and a timeless example of someone who truly embraces learning. Siekia, fa’afetai tele and much alofa).

David Gegeo’s support and encouragement and excitement about the possibility of creative energy was invaluable in my dissertation journey. (For me, you were an ideal supervisor. Your trust, light direction and unwavering energy are a magical combination for those who are open to it. I never thought it was possible for a person so serious about academia to have such a great sense of humour. Thank you for the priceless energy you spent on helping me to laugh and learn).

Thank you to John Schischka for gracefully handling all the writing in need of edits I (figuratively) threw at him. His clear direction and concise approach to dissertation formatting and management was a breath of fresh air during a period of stagnant writer's block. A little creative restraint and dash conformity certainly goes a long way. (Thank you for teaching me that!)

Thank you to the students of The School of International Training (SIT) for sharing their experiential learning journeys with me, and being open to academic transformation. I deeply appreciate your perspectives on education, your commitment to exploration and your acceptance of my role—thank you for the chance to learn from even the most uncomfortable moments!

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the students and staff on the University of the South Pacific (USP) Alafua Campus in Samoa. Thank you for contributing in a myriad of thoughtful ways to my research journey. (Especially Angela- thanks for the non-related dissertation-topic books too, and those “off-the-main-campus, Trish, Sylvie and Peniana-you're the best neighbours, cooks of fish, sharers of jokes and friends). Also, many thanks to the group Rotaract for letting me be a part of their plans.

Also, I would like to thank my friends who supported and encouraged me during my study. And finally, last but never least in my life; I want to thank my husband. (It's not easy sharing a spouse with a dissertation and a bunch of American students- but you did, and you made it look easy. I'm glad we found each other in Samoa. I love you).

Abstract

The following study was conducted over 21 months in the South Pacific. I served as Academic Coordinator for World Learning's SIT's Study Abroad program in Samoa for three semesters. While overseeing independent study projects, facilitating working relationships, and promoting cross-cultural communication among the American and Pacific Islander/Samoan tertiary student, I concluded that -- through cultural immersion, experiential education and deliberate, academically fostered communication and discussion both Western and Indigenous identities are capable of converging to better mutual and lasting understanding.

I spent sixteen months in Samoa completing my field research and five months in New Zealand completing my library research. Over the course of three academic semesters, this study evolved through my volunteer work with the group Rotaract Samoa, my research and teaching experiences with an experiential education programme, and indirectly incorporating 36 American students from various US tertiary institutions participating in the SIT Study Abroad's Pacific Communities and Social Change semester in Samoa, and over 120 Pacific Island students and staff on the University of the South Pacific (USP) campus in Alafua, Samoa.

Encouraging American students to foster relationships with indigenous peoples offered insights into the process and progress of the students' shared interactions. Students were uncomfortable and awkward in their initial associations, however, over time, through the program's immersion techniques, the students learned valuable lessons, about Samoan culture and themselves as human beings. I found the use of experiential education programs and convergence methodology in multicultural learning environments ultimately promoted multi-perspective, culturally responsive student development.

I collected my data through interviews, participant-observations, surveys, questionnaires, volunteering and teaching. I analysed my data using a self-reflexive anthropological perspective.

Glossary of Terms

Bricoleur: A researcher or a student who utilises a variety of interdisciplinary methodological and creative perspectives in the analysis and evaluation of their research aim.

Convergence Methodology: Two or more methodologies used in conjunction with each other to conduct interdisciplinary research/data collection.

Experiential Education: An education practice that includes and reinforce interactive learning techniques that place student within different/unfamiliar cultural settings. Student-led exploration of intercultural experiences outside of the traditional classroom setting is an important component. Experiential education is “hands on” but not necessarily in different or unfamiliar cultural settings. The four key cycles of the experiential learning process are: Concrete Experiences, Observation and Reflection, Abstract Concepts and Generalisations, and Testing Implications.

Experiential Pedagogy: Interactive instruction a student receives both within and without the traditional Western classroom structuring.

Fa’asamoa: “The Samoan way,” Samoan ceremonies, rituals, traditions and daily cultural practices.

Globalisation: The process by which both Western and Indigenous cultures and societies interact and impact each other, forging cross-cultural links and intercultural societies.

Ifoga: A Samoan cultural forgiveness ritual used to restore the peace following serious incidents or crimes. The term ifo means to “bow down.”

Indigenous: A term that encompasses societies and cultures of non-European decent. For the purposes of this dissertation, this term relates to Native Americans, First Nations, Samoans, Pacific Islanders and New Zealand Maoris. This term also encompasses those that live within tribal societies, cultural groups or villages.

Methodology: The ways in which the inter-disciplinary research/data collection was conducted for this study.

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive (MPCR) student: A student from a mixed racial, cultural or religious background that has been raised between cultures, lived extensively in a host-culture, and involves themselves in a variety of cross-cultural activities or education programmes.

Paradigm: A model, standard, archetype or pattern of education-related practices.

Paradigm Shift: The change or transformation of a model, standard, archetype or pattern of education-related practices due to societal and/or cultural need and/or demand.

Pedagogy: The instruction, coaching, training or learning a student receives both within and without traditional Western classroom structuring.

Re-Indigenisation: The re-possession or re-interpretation of cultural or social societal aspects that have previously altered due to colonisation.

SIT: a study abroad provider that is part of World Learning, an educational organisation based in the United States. SIT offers over 50 programs worldwide. It is no longer officially an acronym. Once known as School for International Training but changed not to World Learning SIT Study abroad

Western: A term that encompasses societies and cultures of European decent, indicative of American, British, Australian and New Zealand societal and cultural education practices.

Westernisation: The process by which non-Western and Indigenous cultures change or transform due to the introduction of Western cultural and societal practices, industrialisation and (education) ideologies.

“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

— Mark Twain

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

— Nelson Mandela

“Do you know the difference between education and experience? Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don't.”

— Pete Seeger

Chapter 1

“The present is all that we have and we should live it out as creatively as possible.”
– Albert Wendt

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction and an overview of this dissertation. Section 1.1 and 1.1.1, “Samoa: The things we see in each other,” and “Poem analysis,” provides the reader with a look into the experience of a student from a study abroad programme who represents the multi-perspective, culturally responsive student, described and analysed through a creatively expressed lens in subsequent chapters. An understanding and introduction to a multi-perspective, culturally responsive student is important because the dissertation as whole explores the power and potential of student learning in an experiential education program. Section 1.2 “Introduction,” presents the questions that sparked my research journey, emerging trends in multicultural student bodies and plans/goals with my research. 1.3 “Background Information on Samoa” discusses the history of cross-cultural contact and sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 clarify my reasons for shifting my primary research site to Samoa, and my history of travel, study and interaction with SIT Samoa study abroad program as both a student and educator. Section 1.7 “Experiential Education,” summarises key aspects of experiential education, its importance and methodology. Section 1.8 “Doing Research,” discusses convergence methodology and its role in experiential education programs. Section 1.9 “Chapter 1-2 Transition Notes” summarises Chapter 1 and introduces Chapter 2.

1.1 Samoa: The things we see in each other

We meet, and Samoa asks you like Samoa asked me,

What do you want out of this?

And you answer, speaking about

What

You want out

Of yourselves and the experience.

I've met you before.

I was you, four years ago,

Convinced I had no centre,

While the breath and stones of my body built

Cathedrals on top of institutions

On the centre of my universe.

We meet; our paths are destined to cross

We mark the stages of our growth in

Description, interpretation and evaluation format.

You major in business and economics in America,

But here, you are an anthropologist and:

Everywhere you think you hear music

(*aitu* are watching)

And you think everybody you talk to has something to say.

I've met you before.

I will be you again.

I am you every time I return to the land of the *sky-bursters*.

1.1.1 Poem Development

“Samoa: The things we see in each other,” is a poem I wrote upon my return to Samoa in 2011. I first journeyed to Samoa, from the USA, in 2007 as an undergraduate student with the School of International Training’s (SIT) semester abroad programme that explored the transition of traditional Indigenous societies and globalisation trends in Samoa and on other Pacific Islands.¹ The mention of centres is meant to symbolise the recognition and shifting of personal and cultural perceptions to include important experiences and learning. The usage of the term “anthropologist” is meant to convey a sense of both facilitated alienation and the necessity for cultural exploration to ultimately take place both within a student’s home culture and host-culture towards the merging of Western (American) and Indigenous education practices in order to create a holistic and encompassing pedagogy.

¹ It is no longer officially an acronym. Once known as School for International Training but changed now to World Learning SIT Study abroad. For the purposes of this paper, I will use SIT Samoa.

1.2 Introduction

In, “Teacher education for new times: reconceptualising pedagogy and learning in the Pacific”, Unaisi Nabobo-Baba remarks:

Blending the best of contemporary global and Indigenous local practice is not only an appropriate strategy in facing up to the realities of the changing ‘ecologies of education’, it is a necessary one. What does this mean for teacher educators and teacher education? What does it mean to blend Indigenous and global ideas? Global ideas flood into our Pacific cultures, through every nook and cranny. Yet do we scrutinise them thoroughly? Where do these global ideas, including those of pedagogy and learning, originate and what cultures do they implicitly and explicitly represent? Pedagogy itself-the theory of teaching-is never free of cultural values and ideologies of the society in which it originates. The reality in the contemporary Pacific is that in the main, our systems of schooling and education, of pedagogy and psychology, are an inheritance from other times and other cultures, which we continue to utilise without adequate interrogation of their appropriateness to our contemporary situation and needs, visions and desires. (2007, p. 202)

I have taken these words to heart and have endeavoured to explore different ways of learning. My life as a multicultural student, an educator in both traditional and experiential settings, and an academic seeking to shape emerging tertiary multicultural classrooms, has led to the formulation of several questions. I hope these questions will contribute significantly to academic discourse of re-conceptualising pedagogy and learning in the Pacific and in education programming for students with multi-cultural-perspective identities. They are also the questions that shape this research:

Do culturally bound learning pedagogies exist, and if so can they be used and shared successfully by multicultural classrooms?

How can Western (American) and Indigenous students and teachers speak to each other from a discursive position?

How can relationships between Indigenous and Western (American) identities be cultivated through pedagogy and literature?

Should teachers/academic pedagogies use cultural and racial binaries to initiate dialogue between Western (American) and Indigenous identities, and in which situations is such a dialogue important?

Can creative explorations of identity be used as primary resources to synthesise western and indigenous theories and practices?

How can classrooms be organised and structured so students learn effectively as human beings rather than being ideologically separated from each other in terms of race and culture?

Is a discourse on multiculturalism possible?

My dissertation seeks to explore a multicultural academic environment and intercultural relationships through academic and creative writing mediums. My chosen topic, like my writing styles, is a combination of heritages, traditions and voices. In order to fully showcase the combinations, connections and academic potentials between Western and Indigenous identities, I used a variety of research and writing methods and addressed my research questions in an integrated way across the chapters. If my meaning is not clear enough, I apologise in advance. That which is experimental in nature can sometimes be confusing in practice.

Originally I went to Samoa to study elements of the tertiary education systems within different ethnic and cultural groups in order to draw parallels and map the convergence of complex cultural and racial identities in order to identify appropriate techniques of communication in globalising academia. However, during my time in Samoa from late February 2011 to mid May 2012, I observed an Indigenous people empowered by their culture. Over the course of three semesters, I witnessed the academic empowerment of Indigenous (Samoan and Pacific Islander) identity and traditions at The University of the

South Pacific (USP), Alafua campus. USP plays host to Indigenous (Pacific Island) students/cultures as well as visiting scholars from around the world, so I was able to observe and participate in interactions between Indigenous cultures in a blended Western/Pacific institute.

I also volunteered with the Rotaract club, a version of the Rotary club for 18-30 year-olds with a multicultural membership comprised of Samoans and aid worker volunteers from Australia and America. Rotaract funds and staffs several education projects including a national televised school quiz and career shadow day, and education scholarships. Finally, I worked with SIT Study Abroad Pacific Communities and Social Change programme which provides opportunities for students from American colleges and university students to live and study within an Indigenous cultural setting.²

These experiences ultimately led me to believe that through the blend of teaching techniques and subsequent dynamic teacher-student communication, a basic curriculum and/or experiential education programme can be created to house and host a class of multiracial, multicultural and varied perspectives. In fact, I believe a realistic curriculum, whose main aim isn't to force students to ascribe to only an (American) Western learning and cultural identity can properly assist students with their re-entry into a multi-perspective society after university. Such a curriculum and/or experiential program would address, empower and transform relationships and convergences between Western

² While students may be dominantly Westernized, these opportunities are not just designed for Westernized students or only Americans. Students, many of whom come from dominant Western cultures, are encouraged to explore the diversity of what their host culture has to offer.

American (structured systems of schooling, preaching, and literacy), and Indigenous identities in multicultural academic settings. As Nabobo-Baba states,

All global ideas from ‘outside’ are (or ought to be) subjected to local selection and rejection processes by individuals, institutions and systems. Ideas that flow in with globalisation are dealt with in numerous ways by local and Indigenous peoples. [...] But the underlying reality is that the boundaries between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are blurring, and it behoves us to take a much more active role in determining the processes and outcomes that we wish to see: being swept along blindly or mindlessly is no longer acceptable or good enough. Perhaps we need the baby and at least some of the bath water, and let us not forget the bathtub! (2007, p. 206).

1.3 Background Information on Samoa

For many, Samoa is difficult to pick out on a map due to its small size. Western Independent Samoa or Samoa, (not to be confused with American Samoa, as my focus for this dissertation is on Western Independent Samoa, also known as Samoa), is part of a chain of islands in the South Pacific Ocean region, also referred to as Oceania.

The following map identifies the location of Samoa in the South Pacific, and its relative closeness to Australia and New Zealand.

Samoa Map 1



(The World Fact book, 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>)

Like many islands in tropical locations, Samoa has both a wet and dry period. The latter of which many farmers choose to plant during. Samoan farmers employ both traditional and modern agricultural styles, and today, even some Chinese-style farms can be found in Samoa. Samoa produces a healthy coconut crop and taro, bananas, papaya, lychee, tomatoes, cucumbers, avocados and pineapples are available in the markets for purchase. Small amounts of people are also starting to keep bees and Samoan-made honey is beginning to grace the shelves in grocery stores. Mostly subsistence based living exists in Samoan villages, with a small portion of the population congregating in the major city of Apia. Samoa's traditional economy was based on subsistence-level survival, yet with the impact of globalisation and Western-style economies, Samoa's economy depends on a steady stream of remittances, tourism, and aid. (Toleafoa, 2005, p.85).

Island life can sometimes be interpreted as “non-mobile” due a narrow definition of land-locked transportation non-island dwellers may ascribe to. In the past, and even today in most island societies there are water-based modes of transportation and star-based modes of nautical navigation. In fact,

Cross-cultural contact and experiences were also a feature of pre-Western colonial times for example between Samoans and other Pacific Islanders such as Tongans and Fijians who feature in stories and chants of Samoan traditional oral folklore. This pre-European tradition of contact, conflict and appropriation in language and culture therefore augmented the Samoan disposition for adaptation which manifested itself further in the eventual appropriation of English. (Va'ai, 2011, p xi).

The narratives that these intercultural links have created among islands in the Pacific show that Samoa has a multifaceted history of interaction that stems from pre-contact times. Furthermore,

The idea of monolithic imperial culture and imperial influence is also a mistake in that the imperial culture itself could not be monolithic -- Western culture itself is not one homogenous culture but a heterogeneous cultural process. Moreover, when considering the different influences brought about by the imperial powers through colonisation in Samoa, it is clear that not only Western influences were introduced. The Chinese and Solomon Islanders who were brought into Samoa as indentured labourers also had an effect on Samoa. (Kruse-Vai'ai, 2011, p.11).

Today, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics' *Population and Housing Census Report* approximates the population of Samoa in 2011 as 186,340 people. The Western Samoan islands contain the inhabited islands of: Upolu, Savaii, Manono and Apolima and the smaller relatively un-inhabited islands of Fanuatapu, Namu'a, Nuutele, Nu'ulua, and Nu'usafe'e. Only the two main islands of Samoa are shown on the next map.

Samoa Map 2



(The World Factbook, 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>)

Samoa culture is vested in the value and significance of family. In fact, it can be argued that the societal fabric of Samoa is defined by a strong belief in the importance of relationships. In today's world, the Samoan familial structure has weathered the changing times and emerged as a living symbol that has found ways to incorporate cultural tradition and meaning within the facets of Western society. For example, entire families attend church together as the majority of Samoa ascribe to the Christian faith, (though there is one Bahai temple and a meeting house for Muslims. It is common to see Samoans wearing their traditional dress to church (it is also said that the female dress itself is adapted from the earlier dress styles of missionaries' wives). The service and hymns are usually conducted in Samoan and a traditional Sunday supper is served between the usually all day services.

Historically, Samoans have lived in *nu'u* or villages, and most continue to do so today in intergenerational families made up of children that may have been adopted, elders and *matai* or Samoan chiefs. Most importantly,

The *aiga* or extended family forms the basis of the framework called *fa'asamoa* or the 'Samoan way' which constitutes the means by which all Samoans relate to their *tua'ā* - ancestors, their *matai* - chiefs, their *nu'u* - village, their *itu malo* - district, their *suli* - descendants, and their *uo ma e masani* - friends and acquaintances. The threads of *fa'asamoa* weave different kinds of relationships which are put into perspective and dealt with accordingly. (Kruse-Va'ai, 2011, p. 22).

Matai play an important role in the Samoan family structure and the government. They represent their family groups in a *fono* or a council of the *matai* in their village, the *fono* also functions as a part of the government. Interestingly enough,

When Western Samoa became an independent state on 1 January 1962, the legislative process was controlled by *matai* [...] With the exception of two members who represented the individual voters (those who retained European status and voted on the basis of universal suffrage), the other 43 members of Parliament were *matai* selected, through voting if necessary, by *matai* only. (Meleisea, 1987, p. xiii).

Rather than being erased by the forces of globalisation, the practices of the Samoan way have been carried down through the generations and can be mostly found today in the Samoas as well as New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America. However, while the importance of family remains the axis around which Samoan traditions and functions turn, migration and reverse migration have brought different ideas and ideals surrounding environment and identity to Samoa from a plethora of Western societies.

A deeper look at Samoa's history is important in order to understand the impact on her cultural development. According to Malama Meleisea, in the book *The Making of Modern Samoa*,

The first recorded encounters between Samoans and Europeans were in 1722 and 1768, but the Europeans did not go ashore, nor did the Samoans board the ships. In 1787, the French navigator La Perousse anchored off Tutuila and Samoans came aboard to trade for glass beads—with which they were already familiar as a result of their regular contact with the Tongans who had experienced several prolonged European contacts by that date. (Meleisea, 1987, p. 12).

The history of sustained Euro-Anglo contact and colonisation in Samoa began in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The first missionaries, led by John Williams arrived from the Cook and Society Islands in 1830 to find Christian cults already established by beachcombers. When John Williams departed Samoa, some of the missionaries he left behind found their way into the company of the high chief Malietoa Vaiinupo who used their religious status to reinforce his own and gain more power over the Samoan people. (Meleisea, 1987). Though, “It seems likely that Malietoa intended to monopolise this new source of sacred power.” (Meleisea, 1987, pp. 12-13).

Samoans' traditional beliefs stem from close and necessary relationships to family and include polytheistic and animistic elements. However, like many societies whose Indigenous spirituality was shaped and re-interpreted through the lens of Western contact, their beliefs have change dramatically. Due to an Indigenous belief/story that “foretold” the coming of Christianity, the missionaries were able to “peacefully” bestow their religion. And,

To this day, many Samoans believe that the arrival of Williams [...] was the fulfilment of a prophecy. According to oral tradition, the *aitu* Nafanua fought a

war in western Savai'i which is called *A'ea i Sasa'e male A'ea i Sisifo* (conquest of the hills to the east and to the west). After Nafanua had conquered her enemies, she had control over all political authority in Samoa, and she gave the *malo* (the authority of conquerors) to the district of A'ana and its allies. When Malietoa came from his village [...] to ask her for a share of the *malo*, Nafanua told him that he would have to wait for his turn, and that it would eventually come from heaven. (Meleisea, 1987, p. 13).

For a little more than half of the 20th century Samoa was under colonial rule. The major powers of England, Germany, and United States of America nearly went to war in 1889. The Treaty of Berlin was signed in 1899 and in December of 1899, the Tripartite Treaty replaced the Treaty of Berlin, and Samoa became a protected independent nation overseen by Germany. ("A Brief History", 2011, <http://www.samoa.co.uk/history.html>).

In 1914, troops from New Zealand occupied Western Samoa, supplanting Germany's presence. At the end of World War I and the formation of, the League of Nations, Samoa was a Class "C" mandate to be looked after by New Zealand. Following World War II, under the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, New Zealand began to help Samoa prepare for independence. In 1947 most of the Western Samoan parliamentary body was composed of Samoans and Western Samoa then achieved independence on the 1st of January 1962 from New Zealand. In 1970, Western Samoa became part of the commonwealth and the country's name of Western Samoa was changed to "Samoa" in 1997. ("A Brief History", 2011, <http://www.samoa.co.uk/history.html>).

1.4 Samoa as a Field Site and an Interpretation of the Term *Afakasi*

Samoa has a long history of interweaving, elements of both Western and Indigenous cultures, and thus I believed Samoa was a good place to base my quest to pursue my

research aims. Particularly due to certain cultural concepts I was drawn to. *Afakasi* is the Samoan word for someone from a partial-Samoan descent, or with non-Samoan mixed-blood.

The status of the mixed-race population was an issue of importance from the time that European settlers first became influential in Samoa. The Samoan terms for mixed-race are '*afakasi*—half caste—and *totolua*—two-blooded. The latter has a less racist connotation, but '*afakasi* does not necessarily have the derogatory connotations of “half-caste” in English. Some mixed-race Samoans still refer to themselves as ‘Europeans.’ (Meleisea, 1987, p. 155).

Afakasi is a term that is often used interchangeably with a term like ‘biracial’. Kruse-Va’ai (2011) states:

Samoans encompass and acknowledge their different “parts” or “sides” in different ways and identifying with one does not necessarily deny nor denigrate the other. An important part of the socialisation process is knowing how one is connected to others especially through kinship which forms the basis of knowing one’s extended family both matrilineally and patrilineal. A person identifies and retains her or his family links in different ways (p.16).

Samoa’s mix of Euro-American and Indigenous cultures has set a dynamic precedent on the world stage for gaining further perspective on intercultural and generational influences and relationships. Thus, I have chosen to illustrate a prime example of an experiential education programme, in Samoa, and its curriculum by analysing World Learning’s SIT Study Abroad (SIT) programme Pacific Communities and Social Change. Study abroad students, like people with an *afakasi* identity, can be cross – cultural. They may be visible, or stand out. Have a certain status that can be construed positively or negatively. Be expected to explain, condone or disown the behaviours of those like them. Sometimes feel self-conscious. Be labelled as affluent and unaware and feel out of place. They also may be tested and teased by the people/culture and questioned about their

authenticity and ability to belong. Ultimately, they might change the way they speak to suit certain situations/ethnic groups.

They may not have been born in the place, possess extensive experience or knowledge of the culture and be aware of traditions. They also might not feel closeness with the people or culture, be comfortable living within a culture that has certain expectations of their stereotype, be familiar or fluent with the language and be comfortable with their identity and thus have some anxiety. They may not have a specific, functional/functioning niche in society, but in some cases may be more comfortable than others because their inherent fluid identities make adaption of other people/places/ideologies less uncomfortable.

Samoa contains a rich and complex mix of Samoan and Western cultures. Within a typical western curriculum, a student would learn to separate their identity from anything cultural different, thus unconsciously creating a divide, or *afakasi* identity. Within an experiential education curriculum, Western students and Indigenous identities are intentionally thrown together.

Samoa is an excellent place to experience a multi-ethnic and multi-dimensional way of life. Based on study, personal experiences and connections with this culture, I came to view Samoa as an ideal location to observe and participate with, first-hand, active cultural integration. Seeing and experiencing Samoa/Samoan cultural aspects from different perspectives helped me realise that Samoa hosted integrated parallel knowledge systems within shared Pacific Indigenous and Western contexts.

1.5 From NZ to USP

Originally, I planned to spend six weeks from February 2011 until mid-March in Samoa working with the SIT program and researching education in Samoa. However, due to the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand in early February and the subsequent unavailability of school facilities, resources and housing, I extended my time in Samoa until July. The offer of an academic internship stipend and inexpensive housing in Samoa allowed me to stay in Samoa until mid-October 2012. During that year I made bi-annual trips to Christchurch to touch base with my supervisors and utilise the Pacific collection at the Macmillan Brown Library.

Travel between Samoa and New Zealand added another layer of perspective and experience to my research. In Samoa, the USP library and SIT resources provided a limited amount of both appropriate and new research material. As written sources and technology were limited, I utilized the methods of observation, experience and journaling to organise and translate my research into viable findings. In New Zealand, my research and analysis were exactly the opposite. On the University of Canterbury campus, I sequestered myself in the library or with my supervisors and buried myself in academic texts and had only necessary personal interactions. At first, having to switch off parts of myself in order to function within this dichotomy was difficult and exhausting, and resulted in much confusion, but after six months I could function effectively.³

³ These methods also possibly illustrate cultural characteristics typical in Western and Indigenous student practices.

As a field researcher, getting caught up in the lack of library/research materials available can taint one's ability and severely frustrate and drain one's ability to function within a host culture. After learning to process personal experience and findings, and extrapolate data, not having access to written materials was less worrisome because I began to understand that field data, when incorporated into one's research methods and dissertation, contained the most relevant information on my topic. My identity as a teacher and researcher became a symbiotic one. This type of relationship was useful and highly relevant as my research topic looked at combined pedagogies and epistemologies. The term "combined" was chosen instead of "hybrid" because the term "hybrid" has some negative connotations associated with breeding and creatures of a fantastical or animalistic nature that is not appropriate to apply to people or schools of thought, especially when there is a cultural history of colonisation. Young (1995), in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* remarks:

The use of the term 'hybridity' to describe the offspring of humans of different races implied, by contrast, that the different races were different species: if the hybrid issue was successful through several generations, then it was taken to prove that humans were all one species, with the different races merely sub-groups or varieties-which meant that technically it was no longer hybridity at all. [...]Today, therefore, in re-invoking this concept, we are utilising the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right as much as the notion of an organic process of the grafting of diversity into singularity. In Britain in the 1840s, liberals such as the great ethnologist J.C. Prichard rejected the applicability of the concept of hybridity to man, suggesting that the perceived difference of race merely indicated variety within a single species. [...]Here, therefore, at the heart of racial theory, in its most sinister, offensive move, hybridity also maps out its most anxious, vulnerable site: a fulcrum at its edge and centre where its dialectics of injustice, hatred and oppression can find themselves effaced and expunged. (pp. 9-17).

My research and participation revolved around changing techniques and a population of students mostly from the USP Alafua, Samoa campus. Fluidity and flexibility of thought,

word and deed was and is paramount in systems of academia and situations of learning. Working and researching daily on the USP campus within a multicultural student body and staff from Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Niue, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Tokelau, India, Nigeria and the United States also helped to narrow my dissertation topic instead of widening it.

My research topic evolved from the broad, over-arching topic of Samoan education techniques. My dissertation sought to explore and prove implicit relationships, connections and areas of expansion and growth, through a succinctly focused comparison of convergence pedagogies and Indigenous/Western epistemologies being used on the USP Alafua campus. For me, the USP Alafua campus provided a unique microcosm and launching point of integrated teaching/learning styles, technologies and epistemologies.

1.6 From USP to SIT

I chose The University of the South Pacific campus in Alafua, Samoa as my main field site because I had participated as an undergraduate student from America in an SIT Study Abroad programme that provided basic knowledge and familiarity of living in the Pacific. Almost four years later, I returned to begin my fieldwork in Samoa in 2011 and assist as academic coordinator and assistant for the SIT Study Abroad programme: Pacific Communities and Social Change.⁴

⁴ Celebrating 80 years in 2012, SIT has grown to be a large organization. The SIT programme began in Samoa in the summer of 1993.

The World Learning organisation, (the name of the umbrella organisation that houses SIT), was developed by Dr. Donald Watt during the Great Depression in the United States. Watt wanted to:

[...] Improve understanding across nations and cultures: By living with students in another country, young Americans could learn to think of them not as categories, but as people. So, when the first Experiment in International Living group departed New York in June 1932 on a ship bound for Germany, the 23 students on board became trailblazers for thousands who have followed in their footsteps, building friendships and learning to walk across differences. The students on that first program returned home with a transformed outlook on the world and new skills to communicate with others. (“History,” 2012, <http://www.worldlearning.org/43.htm>).

Over the years, due to the increase in the number of students in America interested in travel and work in developing countries, students expressed interest working with locals in intercultural partnerships on local issues. As a result of that,

When Sergeant Shriver, an Experimenter in 1934, was tapped in 1961 by President Kennedy to lead the Peace Corps, he drew on his experiences with The Experiment, forging a bond between our two organisations that has strengthened over time. [...] Today, SIT Graduate Institute offers a robust set of graduate and continuing education programs designed to meet the pressing need for trained professionals with the skills to address global issues. (“History,” 2012, <http://www.worldlearning.org/43.htm>).

SIT Study Abroad, a pioneer in experiential learning for 50 years now has over 70 field-based programmes in more than 40 countries. SIT students are encouraged to learn experientially and,

[...] Step beyond the boundaries of a traditional classroom to analyse critical issues shaping local communities around the globe. Students become deeply engaged in a topic and undertake their own research, case studies, in-depth practica, and/or community projects. Students enjoy unparalleled access to local, national, and international networks and are encouraged to treat every experience as a learning opportunity. In doing so, students often discover a lifelong passion

that can lead to successive academic and professional achievements [...] SIT Study Abroad is deeply embedded in local communities around the world. SIT programs are designed to respect the strengths and knowledge of local partners.

(“About SIT/World Learning,” 2012, <http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/1065.htm>)

Students apply for the SIT programme they are interested in. Students whose applications are successful are selected based on a combination of their high grade point average and the contents of their application. University semester-abroad SIT programmes last for about 15 weeks and are offered twice a year and are different from other voluntary organisations mainly because of the length of time, their rigorous academics and learning structure. SIT’s mission:

[...] Prepares students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals, and citizens. In so doing, SIT fosters a worldwide network of individuals and organisations committed to responsible global citizenship.

(“About SIT/World Learning,” 2012, <http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/1065.htm>)

SIT programmes deal with critical universal issues such as, global health, multiculturalism, migration and Indigenous peoples, post-conflict transformation, development and human rights. The table on the next the page outlines the SIT programmes that are currently offered:

Argentina: Public Health in Urban Environments	India: Health and Human Rights	IHP Human Rights: Foundations, Challenges, and Advocacy
Argentina: Regional Integration, Development, and Social Change	India: Himalayan Buddhist Art and Architecture -- Summer (Available for Graduate Credit)	Iceland: Renewable Energy, Technology, and Resource Economics -- Summer
Argentina: Social Movements and Human Rights	India: National Identity and the Arts	Morocco: Arabic Language and Community Service -- Summer
Australia: Rainforest, Reef, and Cultural Ecology	India: Sustainable Development and Social Change	Morocco: Field Studies in Journalism and New Media
Australia: Sustainability and Environmental Action	India: Traditional Medicine and Healthcare Practices -- Summer	Morocco: Migration and Transnational Identity
Bolivia: Latin American Revolutionary Movements and Conflict Resolution	Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change	Morocco: Multiculturalism and Human Rights
Bolivia: Multiculturalism, Globalisation, and Social Change	Ireland: Transformation of Social and Political Conflict	Nepal: Development and Social Change
Brazil: Amazon Resource Management and Human Ecology	Jordan: Health and Community Development	Nepal: Geoscience in the Himalaya -- Summer
Brazil: Public Health, Race, and Human Rights	Jordan: Intensive Arabic Language Studies -- Summer	Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples
Brazil: Social Justice and Sustainable Development	Jordan: Modernisation and Social Change	Netherlands: International Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender
Cameroon: Social Pluralism and Development	Kenya: Islam and Swahili Cultural Identity	Nicaragua: Revolution, Transformation, and Civil Society
Chile: Comparative Education and Social Change	Kenya: Urbanisation, Health, and Human Rights	Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and Biodiversity Conservation
Chile: Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and Community Development	Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management	Peru: Indigenous Peoples and Globalisation
Chile: Political Systems and Economic Development	Madagascar: Traditional Medicine and Healthcare Systems -- Summer	Rwanda: Post-Genocide Restoration and Peacebuilding
Chile: Public Health, Traditional Medicine, and Community Empowerment	Madagascar: Urbanisation and Rural Development	Samoa: Pacific Communities and Social Change
China: Community Health and Traditional Chinese Medicine -- Summer	Mongolia: Geopolitics and the Environment	Senegal: National Identity and the Arts
China: Language, Cultures, and Ethnic Minorities	IHP Beyond Globalisation: Reclaiming Nature, Culture, and Justice	Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo: Peace and Conflict Studies in the Balkans
Czech Republic: Arts and Social Change	IHP Cities in the 21st Century: People, Planning, and Politics - Fall	South Africa: Community Health and Social Policy
Ecuador: Comparative Ecology and Conservation	IHP Cities in the 21st Century: People, Planning, and Politics - Spring	South Africa: Education and Social Change -- Summer
Ecuador: Culture and Development	IHP Climate Change: Politics of Food, Water, and Energy	South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights
Egypt: Modern Cairo, Urban Development, and Social Change	IHP Health and Community: Globalisation, Culture, and Care - Fall	Uganda: Post-Conflict Transformation
France: Language, Community, and Social Change	IHP Health and Community: Globalisation, Culture, and Care - Spring 1	Vietnam: Culture, Social Change, and Development
Ghana: Social Transformation and Cultural Expression	IHP Health and Community: Globalisation, Culture, and Care - Spring 2	

("Find a Programme," 2013 <http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/8453.cfm>)

Being able to be part of a curriculum which goes out of its way to teach students the value of Indigenous identity and culture also helps to teach the student the significance of the similarities of vulnerabilities and strengths they find as they progress within the program. I think this type of curriculum will increase in worth as the world continues to globalise. As a result of this, multicultural student bodies are necessary to track changes within curricula because they are more representative of the world's population, and a globalised academic/university population. Coffey (2012), author of the article, "Culturally Relevant Teaching" states:

National statistics reveal that the population of the United States is becoming more ethnically diverse... Teachers must accept the reality that many of their students will come to their classrooms with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial and social class backgrounds that are different from their own. When faced with the heterogeneous mixture of students in their classrooms, teachers must be prepared to teach all students (p. 1).

My choice to focus this study on the microcosm of the USP Alafua campus coincided with Millennial generation, multicultural and multiracial students present on university campuses in America.⁵ Also, due to their combined backgrounds, I believe multicultural and multiracial students possess multi-perspective viewpoints, and culturally responsive learning styles. Ultimately, these types of students might learn more effectively from experiential education programs than conventional ones. In Samoa, due to the SIT programme's long and participatory relationship with the Pacific Island and Samoan cultures on the USP Alafua campus, USP Alafua became my primary field site. While living and working within SIT Samoa, I came to believe experiential education study abroad programmes are currently emerging as the proactive forerunners of convergence methodology. I also believe that SIT Samoa programming supports the growth of a multi-

⁵ I elaborate on the topic of the Millennial generation in chapter five.

perspective, culturally responsive student ideology. The SIT programme could be both a basis for educational reform as well as be a part of educational reform in Samoa and culturally blended communities.⁶

1.7 Experiential Education

Experiential education can take place within the classroom, but it is more common outside of the classroom. Semesters spent living, working and studying abroad in foreign countries where a thorough cultural immersion is required in order to complete the course, mature and hone student ideologies. Immersion programmes also proactively engage students in different ways of interpreting local host and global culture. Students may often leave home with ideas that may seem polarised, and an extreme sense of what is right and wrong, and may return home to find that this belief has transformed.

Experiential education also results in an exchange of information. Put more simply, experiential education is the telling and sharing of story, a pervasive journey with someone or something unfamiliar that allows the individual to view themselves for who they are outside of their comfort zone.

Experiential education, as defined by SIT, involves a rigorous process of integrating direct observation from the field with analytical and reflective learning. To have experience, after all, is not always sufficient in itself. Rather, one must use basic analytic processes and the perspectives of the conventional academic disciplines as ways of seeing and understanding. One must be adaptable to accepting new ways of seeing and thinking in both an intellectual sense and in an everyday living sense. Learning is optimised, and driven home, by the synergy of formal presentations and readings on the one hand and experiential, field-based verification and integration on the other (Sommer, 2002, p. 8).

⁶ I elaborate on this topic in chapter four.

Experiential education and its setting can sometimes act as a mirror for the student, allowing them to have a glimpse of how others might view them. Experiential education can exacerbate both positive and negative aspects of a student's personality, as the learning experiences may make them more and more aware of how their attitudes and choices affect people and themselves. Experiential learning moments can be engineered using types of participatory methodology to ensure that students interact deliberately with and process their experience and feelings with/about the indigenous peoples in their host country.

Nor is experiential verification always easy in a new cultural setting. Indeed, it can be stressful to adapt to a different climate, a new language, strange food, prescribed ways of dressing, and unfamiliar ways of acting in order to be accepted in a new culture and thus able to learn from it. In the process, students are forced to examine many of their fundamental assumptions — assumptions whose existence they may not even have recognised before. They must be open to questioning these assumptions and they must be challenged to do so. They must “reflect radically” on the world, use their skills, knowledge, values, and perspectives, and draw on each other in doing so in order to invoke meaning so that new and fresh questions may be asked. They must experience the world aggressively, view it critically, deal with fellow students and new host country friends with humility, understanding, and responsibility — both inside and outside the classroom. (Sommer, 2002, p. 8).

I participated as a SIT Samoa student but my entry into Samoa the second time around as an academic coordinator and assistant provided the opportunity to participate and think more deeply about experiential education. As the academic coordinator, I was able to track how SIT Samoa used experiential methodology to identify and explore the organic relationships and academic institution/program convergences between Indigenous and Western peoples in its curricula. SIT Samoa's methodological techniques empowered

Samoa/Pacific Island students using participatory and experiential learning approaches.

As Ray remarks:

While aspects of Western methodologies can be useful in regards to Indigenous research, they can be detrimental and imperialist if they are used as a replacement for Traditional methodologies because of their presumed sameness to Traditional ways. (2012, p. 95).

I found that SIT Samoa's teaching pedagogy utilised convergence Indigenous methodologies to unite ideologies and epistemologies through experiential activities including:

Village Study projects conducted by students used a combination of Westernised research and surveying methodology and Samoan cultural, (and language) oral tradition communication techniques.

Homestay experiences in Samoan, Fijian, and American Samoan homestays using Westernised education reporting skills to process and present experiential data, in order for the student to connect their learning to global issues and trends

"Giving back" and working within aspects of Samoan culture, education systems and organisations. Students designed and completed internships, volunteer opportunities and classroom leadership/assistance projects. Students then present on their data collection and analysis, cultural learning experiences, and also leave a written record for the USP library for public usage and give one to whomever they worked with.

These experiential education pathways united Western/American students and Indigenous/Samoan peoples in mutual respect and understanding. Like convergence methodologies,

[...] Methodologies within this category employ broad understandings present within Traditional knowledge systems, are motivated by decolonisation and revitalisation efforts, and work toward the inclusion of Traditional knowledge [...] They do not work exclusively within Traditional knowledge systems but instead in a blend of Western and Traditional knowledge systems. (Ray, 2012, p. 86).

I believe experiential education can be innovative, especially within the right setting. The “setting” demands that participating students acknowledge and actualise the development of a culture beyond the role of an observer, increasing the students’ possibility of constructing a holistic academic narrative. I believe experiential education is the last institutionalised path to empathy between different identities. Western, Indigenous and multicultural/multiracial students need to have a place within an equalised education system and curriculum to affirm their identities. Their identities are fluid; encompassing the changes and traumas their culture(s) has/have gone through. Through their cultural curiosity and education programming, they have woven their lives into each other’s.

It is in the emergence of interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the inter-subjective and collective experiences of [...] community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed ‘in-between,’ or in excess of, the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivations and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical [...] (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2).

Through schools, educational programming, curricula and the awareness and dedication of students and teachers to fostering communication, those being nourished in the realm of academia can move beyond racial labelling and societal stereotypes in the classroom. In the article, “Deciphering the ‘Indigenous’ in Indigenous Methodologies” Lana Ray (Waaskone Giizhigook) remarks:

I use the term convergence because it is important to differentiate between a physical occupancy of space between Traditional philosophy and Western methods and a melding of knowledge systems. The term convergence does not imply an amalgamation but instead makes reference to a junction or a place in which two things meet briefly, then carry on their separate paths. (2012, p. 92).

The discussion of intercultural and cross-cultural interactions between teachers and students is key in globalising educational environments. Cultures are not as separated as they once were, but more accessible through technology and transportation.⁷ SIT Samoa uses convergence Indigenous methodologies and methods to instruct its students and,

In convergence methodologies, although the overall approaches to research are guided by Traditional knowledge systems, aspects of the methodology (predominantly the methods) are borrowed and/or adapted from Western knowledge systems [...] Pam Colorado's (1998) Native Science provides an example of a convergence Indigenous methodology because, as she explains, it is a bi-cultural research model rooted in Indigenous epistemology that uses processes associated with participatory research [...] Although convergence Indigenous methodologies use Western methods, what makes them "Indigenous" is their inclusion and guidance of principles held within Traditional knowledge systems. (Ray, 2012, p. 91).

As the roots of cultures intertwine more and more, and grow shoots of new ideas in once foreign soils, identities are congregating. Being a Western student of Indigenous traditions is almost as common as being an Indigenous student of Western customs.

According to Lévi-Strauss,

[...] A culture's chance of uniting the complex body of inventions of all sorts which we describe as a civilisation depends on the number and diversity of the other cultures with which it is working out, generally involuntarily, a common strategy. (*Race, History and Culture*. 1996).

⁷ I have used an interdisciplinary evaluative approach using academic and narrative writing voices to research an experiential education program using a dual pedagogy in the instruction of its students because I thought this approach would complement the duality.

True power and unity can be found through shared experiences, which stems from the inter-communication present in societies that practice or have practiced oral tradition. I believe experiential education programmes are a valid mode of learning, especially nowadays because people, more specifically students may want to interact with more than just the stories and “storied” lives within their classroom environment. Experiential education demands that students’ academic and learning perspectives focus on the present moment. Learning, and processing learning within the present moment, can deepen any connections and communications while assisting students to become more open to and accepting of new ideas.

The promise of experiences, adventures, discoveries and chances to meet interesting people draws students in; they become participants. Western academia in many experiences, within minority communities specifically, has tended to intrude upon and segregate shared experiences. Even within history classes, the very term “his-story” connotes the existence of only one story and not a shared story. In its very nature, Western (American) academia, or a Western story of learning has already disenfranchised the “other” before, during, and after this history has been taught or told in class. “The one real calamity, the one fatal flaw which can afflict a human group and prevent it from achieving fulfilment is to be alone.” (Lévi-Strauss, *Race, History and Culture*. 1996). Therein lies the pattern of broken communication, shared responsibility and future accountability for the learners, global citizens, and teachers of tomorrow. It is important to note that,

Convergence Indigenous methodologies are value-laden because they provide a starting place for Indigenous peoples and their knowledge to be engaged within

the academy in a way that is consistent with Traditional knowledge systems. Nevertheless, convergence Indigenous methodologies are limited in their ability to fully emerge in Traditional knowledge systems because they make use of aspects of Western methodology (Ray. 2012, p. 94).

Academia, without its prefix “Western”, could evolve into a concept that symbolises a hopeful engagement and meeting of minds. Academia can and should include experiential education, not as a peripheral stage of learning; experiential education, and the experience of “storying” a student undertakes of him/herself needs to become central to the identity of an academic institution, programme or curricula. As people, I think we need both, the whole and the part, local and universal.

There is no denying the originality and particularity of these patterns, but, as they all represent the exclusive choice of a single group, it is difficult to see how one civilisation can hope to benefit from the way of life of another, unless it is prepared to renounce its own individuality. (Lévi-Strauss, *Race, History and Culture*. 1996).

Within the parameters of traditional academia, a student can and must interpret and evaluate learning experiences from an expressive standpoint as well as an academic one. The lenses of education and culture are two different ethos’ through which students regularly process new information and experiences. Education and culture are like the left and right halves of the brain. The part of the brain in the centre bridges patterns and pieces of information through an intricate communication process. Without this union, there would be no integration or understanding. It takes a little imagination and creativity for one to process experience into knowledge, and it definitely takes a lot of creativity for a student to express the changes they go through coherently.⁸

⁸Because of this research experience, I have found that in fact, the process of transforming experience (raw data – e.g, opinion, perceptions, guesses, testimonies, observations, etc) into “knowledge” is a much more

Students have the greatest ability to transform their belief systems because they are constantly coming into contact with new pedagogies, methodologies and epistemologies. “Seeking knowledge is an arduous process which teaches the knowledge seeker humility and patience and ensures that they are dedicated and understand the responsibilities of the knowledge shared with them” (Ray, 2012, p.94). Student who travel and extend the boundaries of their minds are to be commended; students who deliberately step outside of their comfort zone and push an immersion within an entirely new identity are special.

1.8 “Doing” Research

The endurance and innovation of the human race is going to depend on our ability as a species to access and contribute to creative energy and solutions. If we keep spinning the same old wheels, we will run ourselves into the ground. For example,

The term Kinoo’amaadawad Megwaa Doodamawaad, roughly translated to mean ‘they are learning with each other while they are doing’ (Cormier, 2009, 2010), has emerged as a means of thinking about and engaging in “research”[...] this term [is] inclusive and without boundaries. Within this term, concepts such as theory, methodology, method, ontology, epistemology and axiology do not exist as singular entities. There is also no restriction placed on “doing” or the context in which “doing” will occur [...] “Doing” as research is a relational process conducive to a dynamic context of mutual knowledge exchange. This allows for the emergence of multiple bodies of knowledge that embody the physical, the metaphysical and their shared space, unearthing a natural ethos along the way. (Ray, 2012, p. 96).

demanding and fine-tuned activity than merely articulating experience which, might be polished, might not be epistemologically fine-tuned or justified.

In attempting to make my research more fully participatory, I used not only a combination of inclusive research methods such as participatory research, participatory action research, and reflexive anthropology, but also my position as both the academic coordinator and assistant with the SIT programme and as a doctoral student researcher. According to Kabini Sanga (2003), in the article, “A Conversation on the Philosophy and Practice of Teaching Research in Maori and Pacific Education,”

Within Pacific People’s knowledge systems, research is an activity—a “doing thing”, as opposed to being an internal—a “thinking thing” (mind issue) only. Research is also a purposive activity towards community good, rather than merely a good, interesting thing to do. It is pragmatic and is not a stand-alone activity, but one that is integral to the ways of life and practice of Pacific communities and influence by these. (p. 25).

My tactics also allowed me to align myself with the Pacific Islander and Samoan cultures I encountered. As a researcher using an interdisciplinary approach to research a study abroad program employing convergence Indigenous methodologies as their teaching methods, I hope my inquiries will encourage Western and Indigenous educators and students to engage in conversation about their styles of erudition and find ways to value and utilise the traditions of learning within both types of cultures.

To my knowledge, there is almost no precedent for the deliberate convergence of Western and Indigenous academic identities except through experiential programmes. I chose to use an educational programme rather than a work programme such as Peace Corps because I believe the “institution” of education is a socially and economically

equalising tool necessary to the smooth operation of a well-adjusted society.⁹ Every Western school should require their students to study within an Indigenous culture whether that culture is abroad or an Indian reservation closer to home. It is time for educators from Western and Westernised societies to utilise Indigenous and experiential ways of learning and follow the larger trend of globalising cultures and merging identities.

The only way for students to understand a people, a place and themselves within a host-culture is for them release their “safe” self-conceptualisation and immerse themselves in the daily life of another culture. Study abroad students, like Indigenous peoples, work, eat and rest within the host culture. These students form alliances, relationships and understandings with other Westerners as well as Indigenous peoples willingly and unwillingly. The bulk of the students’ interactions with their host culture are at first deliberately facilitated through an institution, programme or pedagogy and eventually no facilitation is needed.

⁹ Through work, a Peace Corps volunteer experiences the same epistemic transformation an SIT student experiences through their academic programme. SIT and Peace Corps are just two clear examples of many programmes or ways worldwide through which experiential education can be acquired. In fact, for the great majority of the world’s people who do not have access to educational opportunities, experiential education is the way through which they acquire knowledge. What’s more, experiential education and lived-experience education was how our human ancestors gained knowledge that informed their daily existence. Thus, SIT and other such programmes (e.g. vocational training centres, universities without walls, etc) are trying to “re-establish” what was/is inextricably part of how humans acquired/constructed knowledge which got pushed to the side (after the fall of the Greek civilization) when education became standardized and commodified. Experiential education has greater relevance today because of globalization and the multicultural and multi-perspective generation.

1.9 Chapter 1-2 Transition Notes

Chapter 1 outlined the evolution of my research questions, topic, and site. It also introduced the first of many creative expression stepping-stones I have placed throughout my dissertation to enhance the evaluation of my data and add a deeper level of experience and interpretation on the topic I have chosen to explore. The creative pieces are ways to explore the transformative power experiential education programmes have on multi-perspective, culturally responsive students, as well as how the SIT programme changed me as an undergraduate. Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students must be recognised as the emerging majority in many education systems all over the world, especially those most impacted by globalisation. Students from developing countries, cultures or learning perspectives in either Westernised or Indigenised sites need to be recognised as multicultural and multi- perspective. These students need more advocates to increase awareness of their societal and thus educational requirements.

Chapter 2

“Part of the art of teaching is the ability to rearrange the world for students - to force them to see things in a new way. I’ve known too many stupid intellectuals to believe that education and wisdom come as a package deal along with facts, it’s your perspective that counts - your ability to see differently, not just to see a lot.” — Sunny Decker, Empty Spoon

Chapter 2 covers the evolution of my research methodology, the interdisciplinary research and writing perspectives I used. My theoretical framework is introduced in section 2.1 “Methodology and Positioning Research,” and section 2.3, “Theoretical Framework and research perspectives”. Section 2.2, “Literature Review,” also explains why I have chosen to interweave my literature review throughout the body of my dissertation instead of in its own section. Section 2.3 expands on the theoretical framework and research perspectives I used for my study. Chapter 2, section 2.4 “Integration of perspectives,” discusses the ways in which I integrated my research perspectives and why, and how I integrated them. Sections 2.5, “Data Collection,” and 2.6 “Methods of Data Collection” discuss the combination of Western and Indigenous research methods and oral tradition within the Samoan culture were used to collect data on the University of the South Pacific (USP) Samoa and University of Canterbury campuses. I formulate my data analysis and evaluation as a *bricoleur* in section 2.7 which explores the power of oral tradition in the Pacific and its role as a tool for cross-cultural communication within education programs [as well as prompting the reader to perceive its usefulness as a creative tool for exploration and expression within this very dissertation. 2.8, “A Synthesis of Multiple Genres of Writing and Understanding,” shows how I have juxtaposed narrative and academic voices within the dissertation to add depth to a traditional research-reporting format. Finally, section 2.9. “Chapter 2-3 Transition Notes,” summarises Chapter 2 and introduces Chapter 3.

2.1 Methodology and Positioning Research

In the article, “Positioning Graduate Research, (or how to avoid painful misunderstandings with your supervisors and examiners)”, by Clinton Golding, he states:

Research typically occurs within an established discipline, sub-discipline, school of thought, specialism, field or area of study. But interdisciplinary research takes a different approach, and integrates the established disciplines, sub-disciplines [...] in unorthodox ways in order to produce something that was not possible from within the established perspectives [...] (2010, p.10).

With these new directions in mind, I decided to present both the topic and analysis of experiential education in an interdisciplinary manner, due to the dynamics of ever-evolving research techniques and educational practices. Golding, quoting The Office of the Vice Chancellor in *Refining Our Strategy*, The University of Melbourne, goes on to discuss how,

Traditionally research has been conducted by individual academics or teams of academics within the same discipline. Now the nature of research is changing. Research is being driven more and more by pure and applied questions that require cross-disciplinary approaches [...], (2010, p.10.).

I have written my dissertation using an interdisciplinary voice. In the role of researcher, I both observed and participated with the experiential programme I was assessing. During the process of compiling and evaluating my field data I ultimately decided that in order to truly exemplify the power of experiential education, my dissertation itself needed to become “experiential.” My dissertation needed to actively “show” along with “tell” the many layers of understanding and connection of experience and academia within multicultural-shared settings using transformational curricula. I used academic and narrative writing voices in order to more fully immerse my reader in the process and

product of my data collection. Only with an interdisciplinary research approach, using participative observation, and an interdisciplinary evaluative approach using academic and narrative writing voices, was I able to achieve a holistic evaluation of an experiential education programme.

Some conflict between disciplinary perspectives is inevitable in interdisciplinary research because assumptions need to be challenged and ‘quality research’ redefined. Yet this can and should be turned into a welcome puzzle to solve, not a disorienting quagmire that drags you down [...] To use Wordsworth, ‘the more you take an original interdisciplinary approach, the more you must create the taste by which this approach is to be relished.’ So interdisciplinary graduate researchers must explicitly articulate, explain, justify and defend their interdisciplinary approach so that their supervisors and examiners understand and develop a taste for their type of interdisciplinary research. (Golding, 2010, p. 22).

The data I collected via observation and participatory action research methods over a long period of time became an incredibly dense and multilayered, almost living organism in and of itself! I also found people’s experiences intimidating to unpack at first. I wanted to be conscious of the influence of the usage of narrative philosophy and literary devices I used in the telling and showing of the stories because I wanted to give my readers freedom to interpret the data and analysis in the stories as well as allow the subjects and/or characters I wrote about/used, movement within the static identity I might have given them in my creative writing. I also wanted to present the variety of voices/perspectives with as much authenticity as possible, which is why I sometimes wrote in the “second person” perspective.

I wanted to present the process of research as another story with an autobiographically oriented voice so as not to distance my reader and any non-academic from my research and write up. I also tried to juxtapose creative and research writing techniques, language,

symbolism, mythology and archetypes in what I like to call a mosaic effect of using multiple pathways of/to knowledge and data. My purpose was to provide a holistic vantage point for the reader, from which to view the lived experiences I tried to chronicle and the dissertation in its entirety.

In the creation of my dissertation, I chose to use a combination of creative writing, with poetry and short stories, and research writing to explore and analyse my topic. I wanted my interdisciplinary approach to reflect the integrated identities, experiential learning pedagogies, and data I collected/was privy to experience/observe. I felt that using this combination of writing styles created a dynamic experience for the reader, that would reflect my journey as a researcher, as well as the emotional impact I felt again and again as I watched the American and Pacific Island students relate to each other as well as learn from one another. I also tried to make my subjects/researched the agents of their own narratives/give them control over the structure of their data being presented. I was self conscious in my mode of representation of my research subjects.

Because of the highly “experimental” framework used, the structure and integration and interweaving of the stories did not and could not really follow a typical or normal dissertation layout, my framework grew with my journey and process as a researcher, as I observed, collected and reviewed/processed data and stories.

I did not want those I was observing to consciously construct their identities to fit within the bounds of my research aims and questions. There were times that I did question my

pedagogical path, which is why I really tried to push myself to “go with the flow”/follow the organic aspects of research and not try to force relationships, data collection and conclusions. Because of this technique, I learned to allow my research pedagogy to become much more fluid.

Some methodological weaknesses might be found in the construction of my stories and narratives. I tried to play the role of a “choreographer,” but it remains that in any translation or interpretation of another’s journey, something must have been lost. My narrative voice also might have ended up controlling the story/reader’s perception.

It’s hard to know what to leave in and leave out. I wanted to focus on lived experiences- which is why my data stems from observation/participatory action research practices. I also wanted to honor and acknowledge the oral tradition heritage of the Samoans and my father and I tried to synthesize the literature review with my creative writing and thus create a space for the reader to explore and ask their own questions.

In terms of any ethical sensitivities, along with the words of the students mostly taken from archival SIT program data, I wanted to juxtapose this with a more creative interpretation, but the links/bridges might have been unclear and lost. Also, in trying to protect their identities, I may have confused the reader as to what stories were real, and what stories were “fiction” and interpretation. In a discussion on the issue of ownership; in my translation/interpretation of these stories, I came to “own” them in a sense-and even though the words were my own-the experiences are not. I should have

acknowledged that more clearly. It was not as democratic as it could have been, even though I tried to use multiple voices and the practice/lens of polyphony.

2.2 Literature Review

Traditional theses and dissertations often follow a set structure of presentation that includes a literature review section.

[...] Graduate theses are expected to contribute to an existing conversation and research community in a particular field with particular boundaries and allegiances. This is usually fairly straightforward for uni-disciplinary approaches, but not for interdisciplinary approaches that deliberately cross-established boundaries. Because interdisciplinary research draws on and integrates at least two established traditions of research, it tends to be unprecedented and unorthodox. Like anything unorthodox, it does not fit the established standards and expectations and is likely to be misunderstood, and this can prove disastrous for the graduate researcher. (Golding, 2010, p. 21).

I have chosen, in the spirit of integrating perspectives and writing presentation techniques, to weave in my reviews of my various literary sources and critiques. Throughout my entire dissertation, I have used the wide variety of outlooks made available to me in the duration of my research journey. Though unorthodox in practice, I believe weaving the words of others alongside my research and analytical process will show that learning is an on-going progression of active choices and evaluations.

2.3 Theoretical Framework, Philosophical Framework and Research Perspectives

The theoretical framework and analysis of this study follows the trend of reflexive anthropology. This framework was chosen to provide greater latitude for creative thinking, exploration, theorisation and reflection in the written paper.

I conducted a close reading of the context of the SIT programme/students and USP students in Samoa. The philosophical underpinnings of my dissertation have helped to situate my work using narrative and metaphor as information resources to gain insights into student journeys and recognition and acknowledgement of the complexity of student experience. This ultimately allowed me to explore their layered identity in this dissertation.

I wanted the reader to think about their own process of research and data analysis, as well as any interaction they may have had with their subjects. Within my creative writing, I used the literary devices of: poetic representation, fictionalised representation, dream sequences, and flashbacks. I used elements of symbolism and metaphor in short stories and poetry in order to focus on aspects of the researcher/researched journey that are not usually told (eg. emotional growth and struggle and spiritual growth and struggle). I want to the reader to experience the possibility and the real and tangible hope for programmes such as this, as agents of change.

Reflexive anthropology can be practiced both within/without and beyond boundaries. I wanted my analysis, which is trans-cultural and trans-societal, to move beyond the established boundaries and perspectives of one society and operate outside the margins of established ways of thinking.

[...] Graduate researchers should take responsibility for positioning their research in the confluence of disciplines. Only they can do this, because there are no 'off the shelf' approaches that can be taken to unorthodox, potentially unique interdisciplinary research. In effect, to be an interdisciplinary graduate researcher

is to be a research leader or innovator who breaks new ground rather than following others' paths. (Golding, 2010, p.23).

My dual participatory role as a researcher and academic intern in a multicultural environment required greater latitude in order that my research not exclude or gloss over the varied cultural/personal experiences and perspectives of the students with whom I worked. Also, presenting data in a variety of ways will allow both intellectual and non-academic access to my research process, research experience and research results. In, "The Anthropologist Has No Clothes: Revealing Experiences from Fieldwork," Mac Marshall states:

This way of presenting information contrasts with the dominant mode of ethnographic writing of an earlier era when the anthropologist seldom appeared as an identifiable individual in the text, and where "facts" were presented as "the way things are" rather than as one among several possible readings of a sociocultural system. In such an earlier style of anthropological writing, the ethnographer maintained both distance from and control over the subjects and subject matter being treated and revealed little or nothing of him- or herself. (1990, p. xviii).

Ultimately, I would like to generate and inspire improved education programmes that teach to multicultural student bodies using multicultural education/learning paradigms. I want these paradigms to actively acknowledge multicultural differences, and enhance specific education practices using modified versions of conventional epistemologies and pedagogies.¹⁰

¹⁰ It may seem as if I'm contradicting myself here. When I argue for generating and using learning paradigms that take full account of multicultural differences, I am in essence arguing against "established epistemologies and pedagogies" for being culturally insensitive, deficient and out of date. Yet, I am also saying at the same time that "conventional" epistemologies and pedagogies can be used which means they are sensitive to multi-cultural issues. If such is the case, then all that is needed is modifying/refining existing ones so that they can be more effectively used in multi-cultural situations. I want to be a part of generating new improved paradigms. I believe the established pedagogies are not sensitive enough. The established epistemologies and pedagogies don't support the Millennial generation. Mainstream theory of

2.4 Integration of perspectives

It is important for researchers to not completely collapse within the dominant culture they are studying and retain an affiliation with their home-identity in order to process the research findings with personal and thus academic integrity. During my research and field study I asked myself the following questions: How much was I willing to assimilate into the Samoan culture? How much of myself was I willing to integrate within the Samoan culture? Researchers do not live, observe and participate with their host cultures to give up their identity; researchers interact with other cultures in order to gain a unique perspective. My research aims evolved alongside my identity as an academic. I found that the adaptation of my research topic and techniques was the key to a successful research experience. My social acceptance on the USP campus was achieved on the individual- to-individual level. Taking the time to foster my personal and research relationships was an important step and realisation. The aspects of my identity most relatable to aspects of Samoan/Pacific Islander identities, helped foster conducive research and positive relationships with the Samoans/Pacific Islanders and myself.

As a researcher, I felt it was important to have a firm grasp of my cultural identity. I also felt I needed to be aware of my cultural, familial and national heritage and how these aspects could impact and influence my data interpretation and analysis. I wanted to be informed/cognisant of how my cultural heritage could be interpreted by those sharing my field site. If researchers are able to understand how they are perceived, I believe they

knowledge/epistemology doesn't take full account of multicultural learning differences. They don't accommodate mixed race cultural and learning identities as academic awareness of these is relatively new.

could better facilitate a way to relate to the culture/people being studied using a system of clearer communication, which transforms traditional understandings of identity.

Indeed, an ethnography that completely ignores the relationship between the anthropologist's experience of self-identity and the fieldwork process in favour of a sanitised and de-personalised account can be considered problematic on methodological grounds despite the resulting aura of scientific objectivity (cf. Whitehead and Conway 1986: 3). Ultimately, this distorts the nature of the anthropological endeavour, in which the subjective experiences of the observer in the field are intricately involved with what is observed and the reactions of the observed. (Tsuda, 1998, p.110).

In order for researchers to process their research findings with personal and academic integrity, they must not completely collapse within the host culture being studied but rather maintain a strong affiliation with their own identity. If you lost your identity, it's akin to losing your anchor. You might end up countless fathoms away from it, but you must always go back in order to process your experience. You may even find that you have changed because of the journey.

As a young woman of mixed ethnicity, in Samoa I was often mistaken for a Pacific Islander. Positioning myself often in the similarities, where my identity and the character(s) of Samoa and USP met, allowed me to conduct myself with authenticity. I also tried to use my ethnic identity as a bridge, but sometimes found it difficult to disengage with a culture and a community I thought I had so much in common with and one that had given me so much. Indeed, a result of utilizing a participatory methodology is the connection, and relationships that you form with the host culture and people.

I also felt the act of assimilation would not support the integration of my interdisciplinary research techniques and analysis because it might encourage the collapse of my research purpose and identity. In Samoa I needed to be aware of certain aspects of my identity and choose whether or not to alter them, i.e. my dress, the way I wore my hair, living alone as a woman in a communal society, and my assertive nature. I think my ethnic identity as a woman of colour allowed me to identify with the Samoans and Pacific Islanders on a cultural level, or at least I felt I could, because we were able to compare our stories of feeling disenfranchised within traditional academic settings. My American nationality helped me, an expatriate living in Samoa, to communicate with my American students. Navigating through the seas of relationships, cultural identities and research identities and knowing when to play a role, expose myself and intentions or keep quiet and listen was and continues to be a painstaking lesson in methodology. I neither claim to be an expert nor a novice, just someone with her own learning experience for which I am grateful to Samoa for hosting.

As a researcher in Samoa, after observing the role and value of oral tradition in song and story, I decided that a dissertation incorporating overlapping mediums would best capture my researcher's journey.

Undoubtedly, the identities that anthropologists bring to the field have a profound impact on the fieldwork process. The manner in which they present their identities (their inner, true self) and the manner in which their identities are perceived by the natives (through standardised social roles) influences rapport, informant acceptance, and access to ethnographic information. Therefore, a consideration of the anthropologist's self-experience in the field helps clarify his relationships with informants, how the ethnographic data were obtained, and the personal biases and cultural factors that structure his selective perceptions and interpretations. [...] A self-reflexive discussion of the fieldworker's subjectivity is not fundamentally incompatible with the understanding of the scientific process

of fieldwork, but is essential to it. Some knowledge of the self is a prerequisite for knowledge about others encountered in the field. (Tsuda, 1998, p.110).

I tried to integrate the perspectives of participant observation, action research and reflexive anthropology in a number of ways. I collected data as a participant observer and analysed it using the lens of reflexive anthropology. I used the lens of action research to interpret and write parts of my dissertation in non-academic languages so I could reach non-academics. Being able to reach both academics and non-academics is also an important factor in the co-creation of equalising and transformative education programmes.

2.5 Data Collection

I began my dissertation in Samoa by thinking and writing both academically and creatively. I used short story and poetry to illustrate observations and learning outcomes. My carefully laid plans of linear research did not fit the Pacific context so I moved from the path of pure anthropological methodology into a more participatory methodology.¹¹ I could not remove myself from situations without participants, nor participate without having time to process the varied abstract cultural concepts. In fact,

[...] Decolonisation of research methods calls for the researched to participate in the research process and for researchers to be committed to an action-oriented research process, in which the researchers are activists dedicated to social transformation. (Chilisa, 2011 p.227).

¹¹ Anthropology was one of the earliest fields in the social sciences that developed and promoted participatory methodology. This is testified even today, for instance, by the requirement in most anthropology departments where a student doing a Ph.D. in anthropology must be in the field site for at least two years (immersion, participation, observation), “subjective-objective” dichotomy. Accordingly, while valuing participatory methodology, anthropology for the most part still subscribes to the views of the conventional scientific canon of “objectivity” as far as data collection and analysis are concerned. This is supposedly to prevent field data and its analysis from being tainted by the researcher’s personal opinion, etc. I am arguing for the opposite, which is also the position upheld by present-day anthropologists since the radical days of the 1960s.

Action research, also called participatory action research, is an inclusive research technique that fully integrates the researcher with their research community, or in my case, the SIT programme that “housed” my research community. Participatory action research is designed to further benefit the research program and community being researched, and as such, I took this charge very seriously. I collaborated with both the Academic Director, the American and the Pacific Island students as well as with the staff and guest lecturers associated with the SIT programme in order to support a mutually supportive learning environment. Participatory research has been labelled and described in various ways.

Hsiao-Chuan Hsia (2006) defines as *praxis-oriented research* a type of participatory research that combines an emphasis on participants as co-researchers with an emphasis on personal and social transformation, while Robert Chambers (1994) refers to this as *activist participatory research* and Donna Mertens (2009) calls it *transformative participatory action research*. The guiding principle in transformative participatory action research for personal and social transformation is purposive active engagement and political action by both the researched and the researcher. The researched and the researcher begin with a clear understanding that research is not neutral and that ideology determines the methodology of searching for knowledge and defining what can be known (Freire, 1973)[...] (Chilisa, 2011, p. 227).

Participatory action research, both pushes a researcher beyond the boundaries of observant research methodology by actively engaging the researcher in their data collection and processing of knowledge, it also helps the researcher and the research community to become more active in the research and learning process. I wanted to create a research agenda and a research space where both my role as a researcher and the role of the researched equally contributed to and directed the research data and quest. In the collection and processing of my research data, I also felt it was important to include elements and acknowledgements of the ways in which my own identity could have

influenced or enhanced my findings through previous personal experience.¹² Utilising reflexive anthropological methods allowed me to deepen and personalise my involvement with my research topic, thus creating/supporting my research community. I wanted to form positive relationships with the researched on the USP Alafua campus, communicate effectively between the Western and Indigenous cultures, and find commonalities that bridged these cultures. The research outcomes for this study were to:

Identify aspects of experiential education that can be useful in multicultural settings with both Western and Indigenous university students.

Examine the evolution of communication between students of various cultures to determine how communication could be encouraged most effectively.

Identify secondary benefits of experiential education and explore the inclusive learning techniques that benefit and empower Western and Indigenous students in multicultural classrooms.

2.6 Methods of Data Collection

I spent ten months in Samoa completing my field research and five months in New Zealand completing my library research. Over the course of three academic semesters, this study evolved through my volunteer (participation) and observation work with the group Rotaract Samoa (comprised of about 25 members), my research and teaching experiences with an experiential education programme, and indirectly incorporating 36 American students from various US tertiary institutions participating in the SIT Study

¹² Participatory action research, when viewed from the vantage point of the “researched”, possesses a philosophy and objectives that are idealistic and in some ways hypocritical. For instance, the researcher and researched may engage in research and co-construct knowledge on an equal basis, however, at the end of the day it is the researcher who takes the glory and credit by means of completing a Ph.D. dissertation and being conferred the degree or publishing a book, etc. and getting the accompanying financial (e.g salaries) and social benefits (job promotion, tenure, status, etc.). Unfortunately, it is an inevitable aspect of the whole enterprise of research in general about which the most we can do is make methodologies, epistemologies and pedagogies that are more participatory and culturally sensitive.

Abroad's Pacific Communities and Social Change semester in Samoa, and over 120 Pacific Island students and staff on the University of the South Pacific (USP) campus in Alafua, Samoa.

I conducted the majority of my participant-observation in and around the Apia, the centre of town in Samoa, the USP campus and in meetings with Rotaract at Hotel Elisa. My participant observations with SIT and Pacific students occurred in USP classrooms and in SIT's USP campus office. With seven Pacific Island students, I also conducted online interviews to gather supplementary background information on their experience with SIT students throughout the months of May 2012 to December 2012. It is important to note that the bulk of my SIT student participant-observant interaction occurred during SIT programming events. SIT programming is an almost all-encompassing commitment. I was with SIT students, almost 7 days a week from 8am until 3 or 4pm. During village stays and home stays, I was with them even longer, and travelled with them to two different countries where I acted in the capacity of a residential advisor as well.¹³ I felt that to formally interview SIT students while I was acting as their teacher would be to abuse my position, and also might be stressful. Being with them for prolonged periods of time, over the course of a semester in several different countries while blurring the boundaries of researcher and SIT academic coordinator also afforded me a rare and insightful vantage point of their student experience. In fact, it would be difficult to argue that even I was outside my own research, which in all honesty seemed fair to me at the time. Furthermore, being of Indigenous and racial minority heritage myself, I found it

¹³ Please refer to Appendix 3 for a sample of a complete SIT Samoa semester calendar of events.

hard to justify maintaining a methodological distance, thus I truly tried to embrace the spirit of participatory action research. However, I do not claim to have perfected this technique, and that involvement wasn't messy, and maybe sometimes unnecessary. There was never any intention to intrude, only to observe, learn alongside and process experiences together. I found that within the SIT curriculum, there was pedagogical space to do this, and its structure served to support my research aims in a productive way, at times this structure also provided clear boundaries between the students and I as well. At other times, the structure broke down the boundaries. Though, for all I hope and believe it was a valuable learning experience. Indeed, I think discovering one's similarities to a culture or people that might seem so different is a learning moment to be cherished.

In my conversations with Rotaract member participants, I followed a traditional interview set-up format in which I asked a question and recorded the answers in my work-journal as I did not have access to reliable recording technology. I conducted individual and group interviews, as well as handing out a survey at the end of my four-month observation in order to gain further and conclusive insights on what had been accomplished during the school semester. I gave the survey to Rotaract Samoa members on 19 October 2011 and out of 20 surveys given, 13 were returned fully completed. Incidentally, all 13 completed surveys returned were from Rotaract members with Samoan cultural heritage. I developed the survey in order to gain a greater depth of understanding into the motivations behind club membership, club activities and

ultimately to learn if there were any special reasons behind their dedication to working on educational issues in Samoa.¹⁴

I first completed a four-month observation of their club activities and events, during which I kept both a field journal and work journal. During the four-month observation, I witnessed Rotaract club members organising and completing plans for a national Samoan quiz competition, career shadow day, environmental awareness and clean-up activities and tutoring duties at the National University of Samoa. With the Rotaract group, during the interview process, everyone had an equal chance to talk, however, due to the fact that I conducted the interviews before, during and after meeting times, not everyone was immediately available for questioning. The information and perspective I gained from the survey however, became a great supplementary resource for my dissertation.

I did not formally interview any SIT students due to the amount of time I spent working with them. I felt that to interview them might cause some undue stress or pressure for them to perform for me. I also felt that interviewing them while I was acting, as one of their teachers would be an abuse of power, thus any follow-up questions I had about their experiences were asked after I had completed my time in Samoa. I also utilised past SIT student testimonials given in May 2009 in support of keeping the SIT programme up and running.

¹⁴ The main results of the survey are discussed in chapter four of my dissertation.

For both my interview and surveying process, I wanted to gather a rich body of qualitative information so the questions I asked were a mix of (mostly) open and close-ended questions.

I officially administered the questionnaires for Rotaract after I first piloted it online with an American volunteer group involved in similar activities in their small community. This group wishes to remain anonymous. During this trial process, I noted how the group dealt with the format of survey, the order in which I placed the questions, and the quantity and types of questions I used. I found that overall, my initial survey took participants around 20 minutes to complete and some felt that the answers they gave could have been more in depth if there were fewer questions.¹⁵

For the follow-up questions for former SIT students, based off my earlier experience during the survey process with Rotaract, the interview questions I decided to use were:

What do you feel you gained from your experience in with SIT Samoa?

Describe the demographic environment of USP

Were you affected by the environment of USP?

Did you have any positive experiences within SIT's programme? If so please describe any experiences, and any lessons or personal realisations you took away.

I wanted to keep the questions as open-ended as possible because I did not want to influence the responses I received, nor interpret them with any of my own bias as I had been a student of the same programme in 2007. At the conclusion of my research in Samoa, I had completed observations, interviews and surveys with 196 people. These

¹⁵ Please refer to Appendix 1 to view the final survey used for the Rotaract group.

people were comprised of SIT and USP students, staff and guest lecturers, Rotaract members and its club activity participants.

Over all, the methods I used to record my field observations are as follows: written notes; I kept two separate journals of research and events, as well as a journal of creative writing and transcribed interviews (conducted over the phone and on Skype). During the time I spent in Samoa, my participant observation with SIT coincided with the times of the programming.¹⁶ I estimate the amount of hours I spent on participant observation with SIT are 290 hours per semester, with the amount of total hours over the course of the three semesters I worked with SIT mounting up to around a rough total of 870 hours.

With Rotaract, my participant observation was mostly conducted during their meeting time, with a few exceptions made when I began volunteering with their career shadow day project. I spent 96 hours in participant observation with Rotaract. Meeting times were conducted on a fortnightly basis and lasted around three hours; I attended 8 meetings, and thus spent 24 hours in meeting time over four months conducting participant observation. Leading up to and during the career shadow day event, I spent around 4 hours a day for three weeks (not including Sundays) helping with preparations and spent a total of 72 hours.

¹⁶ For a day-by-day account of a semester please see Appendix 3.

2.7 Data Analysis

In the analysis of my raw field data, I applied the methods of reflexive anthropology. As a tool in the analysis of my data, I found that being reflexive in my anthropological pursuits was a challenge. In the completion of my research and this dissertation, I not only pushed myself to conduct extensive participant observations, I also pushed myself to acknowledge in my writing my own bias and background as a researcher and person from an Indigenous American heritage. I found that by referencing my own cultural and societal upbringing helped in my exploration of Samoan and SIT learning culture, and juxtaposed valuable findings from both.

Foregrounding my previous knowledge and experiences within the first chapter of my dissertation, and throughout the rest of my dissertation through the positioning of poetry, short stories and personal narratives allowed me to describe my methodology and exhibit my findings and provide my reader with an immersive experience as to how and why I chose to interpret my data. Furthermore, as I began to transit the academic seas between my Western upbringing, my Indigenous heritage, and the Indigenous culture in Samoa, the ideas of the *bricoleur* shaped my thinking. I became aware of the situations Denzin and Lincoln describe in the ‘Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research,’ in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*:

The *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing, to interpreting personal and historical documents, to intensive self-reflection and introspection. The *bricoleur* reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many interpretive paradigms... that can be brought to any particular problem. He or she may not, however, feel that paradigms can be mingled, or synthesised. That is paradigms as overarching philosophical systems

denoting particular ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies cannot be easily moved between. They represent belief systems that attach the user to a particular worldview. Perspectives, in contrast, are less well developed systems and can be more easily moved between, the researcher-as-*bricoleur*-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms. (1998, p. 4).

My research became more focused on discovering people's perspectives on Western and Indigenous education pedagogies. Learning how to situate my interpretations of my findings between paradigms and pedagogies, by bridging them with stories of learning, gave me the fluidity to discover unique and parallel epistemological pathways between Western and Indigenous cultures. As a researcher in Samoa, like the *bricoleur*, I began to understand research as interactive process shaped by my personal history, gender, ethnicity and the people with whom I interacted. I understood Denzin and Lincoln's description more clearly:

The *bricoleur* knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value-free science. The *bricoleur* also knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied. Thus the narratives, or stories, scientists tell are accounts couched and framed within specific storytelling traditions, often defined as paradigms [...] (1998, p.4)

Thus, I was convinced that the juxtaposition of academic research with poetry and story was the most effective way to express my journey as a researcher. I had witnessed how many Indigenous people, both published and unsung, expressed their history and changing identities through poetry and art. Drawings, photographs and poetry thus seemed appropriate and meaningful modes of expression.

The *bricoleur* evolved as the key methodology for the two major parts of this dissertation. The first and more academically oriented section explores the many facets

and complexities of the convergence of Western and Indigenous identities within systems of education or education programming. The second more creative section is the story of my own experience as a Western Indigenous student in Samoa. Creative avenues were most helpful in exploring the complex impacts and possibilities Western and Indigenous identities have on each other within systems of learning. Thus, this dissertation has become a *bricolage*, which Denzin and Lincoln, paraphrasing Weinstein & Weinstein, (1991, p. 164), describe as,

[...] A complex, dense, reflexive, collage like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis. This bricolage will, as in the case of social theorist such as Simmel, connect parts to the whole, stressing the meaningful, relationships that operate in the situations and social worlds studied (1998, pp.4-5).

This choice of a participatory research approach allowed me, an American doctoral student researcher/teacher, to work from within the education system and the culture of Samoa. It created a space for a rich personal and research identity in Samoa, both within and without the SIT program. Learning and transformations are best acknowledged by stories.

We live in stories [...] We need larger narratives, stories that connect us to others [...] new narratives that embed the self in storied histories of sacred spaces and local places. We need to re-narrate the past. We need to tell the past and its stories in ways that allow us to disrupt conventional narratives and conventional history. Such disruptions help us to better understand how racism and social injustice have been seamlessly woven together (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, p.4-5).

My time in Samoa allowed me to build on my experiences as an Indigenous/racial minority student, teacher and researcher and to create a dissertation which discusses current issues, techniques and curricula that evolve from the convergence of the

perspectives of Western and Indigenous peoples' who find themselves as students within globalising education systems.

2.8 A Synthesis of Multiple Genres of Writing and Understanding

The two poems below symbolise the history of students being trapped between two juxtaposed cultural epistemologies and pedagogies.

The Decision

Who will you choose
Me, the revolutionary
Or him, the conservative?
Education is a friend of mine
Custom is a friend of his
My tools are pencils, books, rulers
His tools are leaves, stone, magic
Modern world is mine
Old world is his
Oh, my people
Who will you choose
Me, the revolutionary
Or him, the preserver?
The decision is yours
(Kalsef, 1992, p. 23)

Thinking

you say that you think
therefore you are
but thinking belongs
in the depths of the earth
we simply borrow
what we need to know
these islands the sky
the surrounding sea
the trees the birds
and all that are free
the misty rain
the surging river
pools by the blowholes
a hidden flower
have their own thinking

they are different frames
of mind that cannot fit
in a small selfish world
(Thaman, 1999,p.15).

These poems ultimately communicate a distinct distress of someone having to choose between two types of perception and expression. This type of emotional divide in education systems cannot go on as the current and emerging students have multiple layers of identity, perspective and experience. I hope that my choice to use both narrative and academic writing styles successfully merges and layers my research data and analysis.

Wendy Doniger, in the foreword of *Myth and Meaning*, credits Levi-Strauss, the author, with founding “a new genre of introspective, subjective, lyrical writing about fieldwork that rescued the field of anthropology from scientific posturing. Paradoxes are to Levi-Strauss what whales were to Captain Ahab.” (1995, p. x). The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the power of experiential learning programs- more specifically the power of the SIT learning programme in Samoa. A section of my dissertation is comprised of short

stories and poetry, each about a moment of learning and realisation. Such stories and narratives can be used as learning models.

Even though “story” is usually associated with people telling about themselves and/or events in which they have been involved, the explanations of educational ideas, paradigms, and proposals constitute “story” as well. Educators need to organise their conceptions and experiences in working with students of colour into meaningful “tales of important happenings,” as much as individuals need to do so with their personal encounters. (Gay, 2000, p.4).

Using narrative instead of academic language in this part of the dissertation exemplifies the need for the juxtaposition of both these writing techniques in order to prove the necessity of the other even though both types of writing tend to debunk the other.

Academic authors first fragment that which is experienced as seamless, and then, in conforming to various conventions in the use of the printed word, seek to give an impression of the seamlessness of their creations. The drive towards formal seamlessness suggests an imitation of the existential seamlessness, and hence 'authenticity', of lived experience. (Chandler, 2007, p. 86).

Creative writing is an avenue to express what happened more vividly and illustrate what I learned during my field study. It provides an opportunity to interpret and incorporate the field data into an academic dissertation. Creativity from scratch and interpreting the ideas and images of others allowed me to be more in the moment and explorative with my analysis and evaluation of research data. Story is one step away from an actual physical experience, and in a sense a story can be an emotional experience.

Myths, like all things in constant use, break and are fixed again, become lost and are found, and the one who finds them and fixes them, the handyman who recycles them, is what Claude Levi-Strauss calls a *bricoleur*—a term that he made famous even in English-speaking circles—and that the English used to call a "rag-and-bones man." My themes are made in what the poet William Butler Yeats (in "The Circus Animals") called "the foul rag and bones shop of the heart." In the ecology of narratives, recycling is a very old process. Each telling of a myth

draws upon these rags and bones, and each piece has its own previous life history that it brings into the story. (Doniger, 1995, p.ix).

Assisting students and faculty who are working towards cultural understanding and in-depth cultural communication has been a vision of mine since childhood. This dissertation will hopefully help teachers and students transform their challenging journeys through diverse places and headspaces into accomplished goals and academic milestones. Bell Hooks (1994), in *Engaged Pedagogy* remarks:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. (p.21).

Experiencing both the organic and forced fusion of globalised ways of living is fundamental in order to understand more fully how the seemingly isolated and indigenous societies of the world are linked through struggle and purpose. Bell Hooks goes on to say:

That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives to academic discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. But most professors resist being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit (1994, p. 21).

As an American, both learning and teaching within a Samoan cultural context has spurred and inspired me to deeper exploration of communication techniques. I hope my research and writing will deepen my personal commitment to help students collaborate with different cultures and take risks involved in choosing non-traditional academic avenues.

2.9 Chapter 2-3 Transition Notes

Chapter 2 explored my interdisciplinary research and dissertation-writing methodology and gave an in-depth account of the evolution of my unique methodology. Chapter 2 provided a better understanding of the ways in which my research and writing perspectives, as integrated cross-cultural communications, promote empathy and the appreciation of different cultural modes of teaching and gaining wisdom. Chapter 3 explores the mediums of oral tradition and organisations currently working towards the unification of global trends, multi-perspective student bodies and culturally responsive teaching methods.

Chapter 3

As I see it, there are no curriculum boundaries when addressing issues of race, class, and gender. Indeed, for some students the process of understanding and knowing begins in one class and continues in another. The issues, and the knowing thread across specific courses. In the Western world, this is referred to as the academic journey; in my world it is called the continuous circle or the life hoop. - Brenda Collins Flyswithhawks

Chapter 3 introduces the importance of alternate educational methods by showcasing the history and importance of oral tradition. Section 3.1, “Re-Humanisation and Trans-cultural experiences” discusses the implications and possibilities of cross-cultural interaction and experience sharing. In section 3.2, “Oral Tradition and Storytelling as Education Paradigms” relates the personal motivation and drive I possessed to complete my dissertation to the greater need for educational reform. Personal experiences and observations have made me a great believer in the power of “looking back in order to move forward.” Oral tradition, though more commonly used in Indigenous societies before contact with Western ones, can be heralded as a tool ready to be utilised in shifting experiential education paradigms. Also, oral tradition, while a proven effective form of cultural communication and a site for storage of historical lessons prefaces the demand for more culturally responsive teaching methods. Section 3.3 “Chapter 3-4 Transition Notes” provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 3 and introduces Chapter 4.

3.1 Re-Humanisation through Narrative and Trans-Cultural Experiences

For many Indigenous cultures, there is a rich history of oral tradition, in Oceania, both oral tradition and the orator tradition are still important cultural keystones, especially in Samoa. In fact, in Samoa, a special version or dialect of the Samoan language is spoken only by *matai and/or elders* during particular ceremonies. Though certain aspects of oral tradition may have been affected by globalisation, in Samoa, cultural narratives are being adapted through various forms of media and even in school pedagogy.

New Zealand is one such a place where Indigenous peoples' historical narratives, especially the narratives from Maori and Samoan culture have been transforming and informing education practices. Incidentally, New Zealand also has a large Samoan population. In their article, "Kaupapa Maori messages for the mainstream", Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn (School of Education, University of Waikato) state:

Narrative pedagogies provide one means of creating power sharing relationships in classrooms. The aim is to create, in the minds of those taking part in the pedagogic process, an image of relationships characterised by connectedness, collaboration, commitment and participation. Such images generate principles of active, learner-centred education, where learning is problem based and integrated, and where a holistic approach to curriculum is fundamental to the practices developed. The narrative metaphor suggests that people lead storied lives and what we call "learning" is a process of storying and re-storying. Rather than learning being seen as gathering knowledge from other people, or learners being seen as receiving transmitted knowledge, the narrative metaphor pictures learning as the joint outcome of interactions between individuals and/or groups, teachers/pupils, people/text/resources, and so on. This also means that in a culturally diverse classroom, there is a great variety of stories and storying and a great variety of possible interactive relationships. (2000, p.5).

Utilising the methodology of creative writing as a genre of a social expression is my way of trying to share knowledge, in a dynamic and equal relationship I hope to establish with my reader. Bishop and Glynn go on to say:

Conversation and communication possess the power to integrate Western and Indigenous identities. Oral tradition is not just an aspect of Indigenous cultures, song, speech, storytelling and even literacy and film contribute to both traditional and modern modes of communication and remembrance. Oral tradition is the basis for, and encompasses the ingenious transmission of knowledge and history. Carol Lauritzen and Michael Jaeger (1997) use narrative as a metaphor for co-constructing curriculum. They suggest this approach will allow children of culturally diverse backgrounds to take part by bringing their own sense-making processes to bear on stories. They suggest that a rich compelling story with a universal theme is an ideal medium for containing and organising the curriculum in a way that addresses the diversity of learners in modern classrooms. (2000, pp. 5-6).

I think in order for the concept and practices of experiential pedagogy to continue to grow, students' ways of presenting evidence of their learning must expand beyond traditional ideological boundaries.

In this approach, learners are empowered/facilitated through stories to grow from their own prior knowledge to new understandings appropriate to their own experiences. This allows students to co-construct curriculum content through negotiation with their teachers. Students and teachers learn to negotiate ways and means of developing strategies for investigation and exploration, as well as ways of interpreting and representing their findings. In classrooms employing narrative storying, learners do not all have to arrive at the same point or understandings, and a diversity of learning styles and approaches is always admissible. (Bishop & Glynn, 2000, p. 5-6).

Cross-cultural communication begins with sharing stories from your heritage, but also from your immediate family history and experiences. I think sharing stories leads to shared stories and realisations of commonality, and these realisations lead back to a deeper connection and more intuitive communication with self and surroundings.

This suggests a pedagogy where the participants in the learning interaction become involved in the process of collaboration and of mutual storying and re-storying. A relationship can then emerge in which both stories are heard, or where a new story is created by all the participants. (Bishop & Glynn, 2000, p. 7).

3.2 Oral Tradition and Storytelling as Education Paradigms

Oral tradition and storytelling are viable ways to communicate between cultures, educational pedagogy and curricula development. According to two prominent and experimental scholars of/in qualitative research:

The oral history does not differ from the unstructured interview methodologically, but in purpose. Oral collection of historical material goes back to ancient days, although its modern formal organization can be traced to 1948, when Allan Nevins began the Oral History Project at Columbia University (Starr 1984, p. 4.). Oral history captures a variety of people's lives, from common folks talking about their jobs [...] to historical recollections of famous people [...] (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, p. 61).¹⁷

As students or teachers we decide whether or not to collapse within the school system, leave the system, or learn to work mindfully from within the system. Such a choice may define one's academic career and the type of person one hopes to become. When I was little, I wanted to be Scheherazade, Aesop and Homer and save the world through stories. As I grew up, I realised that students and teachers do this every day simply by incorporating moments of global comprehension into their awareness and curiosity.

In her essay, "Here Our Words," Selina Tusitala Marsh (1999) articulates, "Sharing words, telling stories, and retelling histories and mythologies is part of a contemporary

¹⁷ Denzin and Lincoln have put forth a Euro-Anglo view of oral history, however Indigenous peoples' oral history goes beyond 1948, and has been re-written and re-imagined.

cultural revitalisation [...] Reclaiming orature through writing allows the healing of past silences and invisibilities to take place in the wake of colonisation”. (p. 169). I love to tell stories and I love to listen to them. My friends joke that I will always be an eternal student traveling around the world and finding ways into the classrooms where it is possible to do both. As a young child I first heard the words of ancestors coming from my dying father and living mother. Those stories merged the past and the future, the real and the imagined and became an integral part of my multicultural identity. This relentlessly pushed me towards a deeper awareness and understanding of another’s development. In the article, “The Process of Knowing and Learning: An Academic and Cultural Awakening,” Brenda Collins Flyswithhawks, a member of the Eastern and of Cherokee and psychology instructor, tells a story similar to mine. She begins,

The old people say being Indian today is like having your feet in two canoes. One foot in one canoe, one foot in another; one foot in one world, one foot in another. Trying to balance both canoes at the same time, while the water underneath is constantly changing; trying to live in two worlds, while the rules are constantly changing. This is what it is like for my students of colour, as well as for me. Trying to live in the Western world, while trying desperately to hold on to our cultural world of difference. Trying to hold on to a language that is not acknowledged as legitimate by the dominant culture, trying to hold on to traditions that appear irrelevant to the Western mind, and trying desperately to hold on to an identity that can become so easily consumed [...] (2012, p. 35).

As a child, finding literature, arts or schools that provided experiences from a dual perspective was difficult and has made the inclusion of a creatively written section to my dissertation imperative. If I were a studio artist or an accomplished dancer, I could more fully and visually express the collaborative research and discovery experience that shaped

my time in Oceania in those terms, but the medium of creative writing has always held my voice.

As a researcher, I sought to transform narrow academic cultural viewpoints by understanding the presumptions that drove students and teachers towards specific conclusions. A researcher can utilise a variety of interpretive lenses such as stereotypes and pedagogies to better perceive their topic; these lenses provide a pre-determined and narrow focus of the subject. Lenses can sometimes be hidden in the researcher's identity and the identities of the people with whom the researcher interacts. In the article, "Neo-colonialism and indigenous structure," Haunani-Kay Trask (1993), remarks

The experience of a legal identity is, as with all identities, both psychological and political. Who we believe ourselves to be is often not what the colonial legal system defines us to be. This disjunction causes a kind of suffering nearly impossible to end without ending the colonial definitions of who we are (p. 135).

As the daughter of a White/Lebanese Lutheran minister, and a Black/Apache life-without-parole prisoner, I was raised between two very distinct socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to have a close relationship with my father, I grew up visiting medium and maximum-security prisons as well as a correctional facility in which I experienced the physical and spiritual deaths of loved ones. I also grew up with my mother in Cambridge, MA on welfare in an artistic community with annual contact with her well-to-do family. My father had little to no formal education, while my mother had a Master of Divinity. Neither my father's nor mother's family accepted my parent's marriage. When I was born, both sides of the family predicted I would become a ward of

the state. My personal survival amidst the despair of my progeny-of-prison peers as well as my university accomplishment is entirely due to the educators who ceaselessly pushed me to be more than just a statistic.

As a multiracial minority, I endured questions and comments about my intelligence level, grooming habits and sexual preferences from my peers and sometimes teachers. Some of the questions may have been usual, obvious ones, yet they seemed to come from a racial context that overpowered the words I wanted to speak, making me someone determined by stereotypes. As an undergraduate at Muhlenberg College, in Allentown, Pennsylvania USA, I participated actively in the multicultural outreach and community service clubs, and was even president of a few. Although I could play the part of a stereotypically unhappy American racial minority, it wasn't a reality I could feel in my core. Nevertheless I found myself trapped in the pre-assigned/assumed identity that has culminated in society for centuries. I forgot that just as I was a student of English Literature, I was also a student in the "class" of human nature. In an attempt to explore the history of American-Native American interactions, I added American Studies as a second major and moved to The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico during the spring semester of my sophomore year.

My classes in Santa Fe were innovative. Both professors and students put great emphasis on the resonance of oral tradition and the shapes and patterns of silence. The framework of the class constantly evolved around an organic centre that lived its time and then died. Neither the professor, nor the students were in complete control of the discussions or

assignments. We continually listened intently and talked freely about information being presented.

In Santa Fe, I gained an *incredible* sense of place and placement. I began to feel and actively participate in my growth and identity on a holistic level. This contrasted sharply with the Westernised collegiate system in which I functioned only on an intellectual level that allowed me to fit more appropriately within and without the classroom. Santa Fe ultimately gave me the tools to make a difference in the way I received/heard my education at Muhlenberg. I finished my undergraduate degree early because of the death of my father, and went on to complete a SIT Study Abroad semester in Samoa. The program, which also took us to American Samoa and Fiji, focused on many aspects of Indigenous ways of life. In Samoa, I traced the evolution and cultural impact of *ifoga*, a forgiveness tradition that permeated into my own life.

The crime my father committed had always heavily burdened my psyche and I had always been judged by science and data. Before my home stay in a Samoan village, I had almost no concept of a sentient communal identity. Being able to participate in a communal life style helped me gain an understanding of the synergy of land and spirit that helped me move beyond the guilt and discrepancy of my academic youth.

Living within Samoan culture also helped me to understand that forgiveness of self and the situations that systems have forced one into lies at the root of change. Pain transcends borders just as easily as pleasure. The key resides in the process of learning how to

harness the positive and negative aspects of an individual's perception in the creation of a co-constructive curriculum. A co-constructive curriculum can only be achieved if students and teachers start pushing the boundaries of what is traditionally expected of them academically. In the essay, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," Bell Hooks (1990), says,

I have been working to change the way I speak and write, to incorporate in the manner of telling a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me. I have confronted silence, inarticulateness. When I say, then, that these words emerge from suffering, I refer to that personal struggle to name that location from which I come to voice – that space of my theorizing. (p.80).

After a semester in Samoa, I taught for a year in the US before enrolling in a Masters of Indigenous Studies program in New Zealand. The juxtaposition of my experience in American schools with Indigenous minorities, and a New Zealand school with an Indigenous majority influenced my decision to research and write a dissertation in Samoa and at The University of Canterbury, on the stories of Western and Indigenous convergences in education systems. Brenda Collins Flyswithawks concludes her story with these words,

[...] So, I try to integrate my world into my teaching methods. I try to build bridges between worlds, instead of trying to exchange one for the other. I try to help my students feel pride in where they come from so that they don't feel ashamed of who they are or who they want to be. As I encourage them, I become encouraged. As I lift them up, they lift me up. As I believe in them, they believe in me. As they become transformed, I become transformed. (2012, p. 35).

The information I collected on the education systems, identity explorations, and stories led back to and spiral out from Samoa. It was not coincidence that in my search for globalised, multicultural pedagogies, I discovered and then came back to Samoa.

3.3 Chapter 3-4 Transition Notes

Chapter 3 discussed my academic experiences with combined pedagogy in multicultural environments that suggest, multi-perspective and multicultural students can operate between the paradigms of traditional academia and creative thinking, research and expression while remaining true to their Western and Indigenous backgrounds. Chapter 4 will help the reader to relate a personal experience to a cultural and societal experience and reforms taking place on a national level in Samoa.

Chapter 4

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” — Malcolm X

The words of Malcolm X in the quote above will continue to ring true throughout the epistemological and pedagogical evolution in student and teacher ways of learning. Section 4.1, “Setting the Scene,” includes an overview of Samoan cross-cultural linguistic, literary and educational developments, as they relate to the integration of Western and Indigenous ways of thinking, communicating and living. Finally, sections 4.2 and 4.3 “The Tree of Opportunity, PRIDE Project and Rotaract Samoa,” explore three current educational transformations in Samoa, and the organisations behind these changes. The blending of Western and Indigenous education techniques and the re-Indigenisation of learning methodologies has made Samoa a stronghold of forward-thinking movers and shakers setting an example of formative reactions to globalisation. Section 4.4 provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 4 and introduces Chapter 5.

4.1 Setting the Scene

In order to understand the impact of present day education reforms in Samoa, it is necessary to first explore the history and key cultural aspects that have informed these changes and make Samoa a significant place to situate an SIT programme. According to Emma Kruse-Va'ai, a well-known Samoan educator, missionaries, the German administration and the New Zealand administration impacted Samoan culture in profound ways. Furthermore,

The period from 1830-1900 can be seen as the awakening era for formal Western education in Western Samoa when contact with the missionaries instilled a desire in Samoans for formal education as schools were established by different missions in different parts of the country. However, this education was superimposed on a "daily life" education which taught Samoan culture and skills for survival without a need for a written language. (Va'ai, 2011, p. 47).

Kruse Va'ai argues that when the presence of missionary teachers began to increase in Samoan villages, this contact also influenced the Samoan language. Samoa transitioned from a society that relied singularly upon oral tradition, to one that used written language. However, alongside this lingual shift, aspects of the English language culture have been "Samoanised," through appropriation. In fact,

Such 'cultural productions' are recognisably Samoan and they are part of that re-asserting process that allows culture and identity in all its multifariousness, to be expressed. (Va'ai, 2011, p. 126).

In Samoa, many creative and innovative thinkers continue to find a myriad of ways to incorporate Samoan language and culture into school curricula as well as Indigenise parts of the Samoan education system. The Samoan authors Albert Wendt, Sia Figiel and Lani Wendt exemplify a contemporary movement towards bi-lingual, bi-culturally-responsive

integration of language experience and transforming social perspectives. It is interesting to note that,

Different Samoan writers demonstrate in various ways how they have appropriated English for literary writing and creative expression. Having acquired the language through a post-colonial education, Samoan writers have realised the political and cultural possibilities attendant upon using the English language for their writing. (Va'ai, 1998, p 128).

Albert Wendt's novel, *Sons for the Return Home* continues to stand as a creative example of storytelling that seeks to interweave cultural awareness and the reality and results of bi-cultural relationships and practices. His novel recalls to mind Kruse-Va'ai's argument that,

Writing in English enabled rather than disabled. This literature became a discourse of resistance in which Samoans used English, not to reaffirm the power of imperialism, as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o claims, but to disrupt it using its most powerful tool. From colonial strongholds such as religion, politics and education, literary writing drew much of its anti-colonial inspiration. It articulated the effects and influence of colonialism on different aspects of Samoan society. Ironically, by using the language of the coloniser, Samoa asserted its own centrality and cultural resilience against imperial domination. (Va'ai, 2011, p. 148).

Sia Figiel's novella, *Girl in the Moon Circle*, traces a young Samoan girl's pre-adolescent journey to a deeper understanding of how her village culture is shifting to include emerging trends of media, post-colonial education in Samoa, returning students from New Zealand and negative aspects of globalisation. Throughout her book, Sia Figiel uses both English and Samoan to literally communicate a sense of multi-perspective characters and Samoan cultural appropriation. In a fascinating twist, Sia, in an open discussion in American Samoa on Samoan culture said that her book is meant to be read aloud for its unique sound. A quirk, undoubtedly hearkening back to times when the Samoan language was completely oral.

Sia Figiel's masterful use of Samoan and English languages without corresponding translations, and her portrayal of Samoan traditional beliefs transcribed for a wider audience, shows a dynamic understanding of cultural integration while paving the way for the emergence of contemporary Samoan fiction. Lani Wendt's recent book, *Telesa*, the first in a fantastical trilogy about the story of a bi-cultural, half-Samoan girl from the United States in search of her mother's family in Samoa, is a final example of the indigenisation of literary and written storytelling- techniques.

Due to Samoa's unique history of cultural integration and non-violent religious acceptance, Samoa might be considered an epicentre for education reform. Samoa is a site where multicultural responsive education restructuring is taking place in a variety of ways. In "Representations of Cultural Identities," Hereniko (1994) writes,

Islanders who work in regional institutions [...] tend to see themselves as 'pan-Pacific' or international persons, with a commitment to the Pacific region, although they may still strongly identify themselves as belonging to a specific ethnic or cultural group. These individuals are usually the products of multicultural experiences. (p. 430).

Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, a noted Samoan educator, was influential in the expansion of both Samoan and bi-lingual education programming in Samoa. In an effort to strengthen the Samoan lingual and cultural identity, she founded The Indigenous University of Samoa (*Le Iunivesite o le Aмосa o Savavau*) in the mid-1990s and the curriculum at the school is taught in Samoan. (Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiono_Fanaafi_Le_Tagaloa, 2011).

Aiono received her doctoral degree from The University of London, and her PhD focused on the topics of educational philosophy and applied linguistics. ("PhD a 'fantastic' achievement", 2009, *Otago Daily Times*). These two concentrations clearly inspired Aiono to work towards certain goals in back in Samoa. Aiono has served as the Director of Education for the Samoan government in the 1960s, a Principal at Samoa's Teacher's College and a Professor of Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa (NUS). Aiono was also chancellor of NUS from 1982-1985 and has published many works on aspects of Samoan culture and education.¹⁸ (Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiono_Fanaafi_Le_Tagaloa, 2011).

There are many other examples of how Samoans are currently proving themselves to be leaders in Pacific cultural integration and educational reform. However, the efforts of Albert Wendt, Sia Figiel, Lani Wendt and Aiono Le Tagaloa illustrate several creative examples of how Samoans have Indigenised and adapted Western cultural and educational paradigms.

4.2 The Tree of Opportunity and the PRIDE Project

The year 2001 is marked by a distinguished symposium given on "Re-thinking Pacific Education". Professor Konai Helu Thaman, Honourable Dr Ana Mau Taufe'ulungai and Associate Professor, Kabini Sanga were the founders of The Rethinking Pacific

¹⁸ The Samoan Studies department at NUS is now called Centre for Samoan Studies. Samoan has also become an exam subject and requirement for Arts majors at NUS.

Education Initiative “for and by Pacific Peoples” (RPEIPP). “Re-thinking Pacific Education.” This symposium,

[...] Provided opportunity for a select group of Pacific educators, 19 in all, who have already begun the process of interrogating the values, assumptions and beliefs underlying formal education and development, to share, debate and reflect on what they believe to be the main issues and challenged in Pacific education today and to begin exploring new directions and alternatives in education and development, which might prove more meaningful to Pacific people. (The Institute of Education (USP), 2002, p.12).

Using the metaphor of the “Tree of Opportunity”, the colloquium explored issues in Pacific education and the ways in which Pacific education, institutes and teaching ideology could evolve to encompass a host of ideologies. The “Tree” encompasses both the past and future of education in Oceania as its roots are grounded in the cultures, stories and arts of its societies and peoples. Furthermore,

The Vision of Education, symbolised by the ‘Tree of Opportunity’ is about survival, transformation and sustainability and its success is measured in terms of performance and appropriate behaviour in a particular context. (The Institute of Education (USP), 2002, p.14).

It can be argued that this meeting inspired a deeper awareness in people involved with education in the Pacific and Samoa, and thus has strengthened national endeavours such as the PRIDE project in Samoa. According to the online reports from USP’s Institute of Education,

Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and lifelong learning. These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development (2012).

The Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education, also known as the PRIDE project, was developed by 14 member countries of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) and Tokelau. This project was created by government officials from the Ministry of Education in Samoa to assess regional educational matters. PRIDE's mission statement is:

To expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures. (Puamau & Teasdale, 2005).

In, *Educational Planning in the Pacific: Principles and Guidelines*, Konai Helu Thaman (2005) argues that the paradigm shift in the Pacific,

[...] Is a challenge for teachers who are expected to mediate the interface between the different cultural systems of meanings and values that continue to exist in their schools. As cultural mediators, Pacific teachers occupy an important but culturally ambiguous position. Whilst their professional training commits them to the rationale and practices of a western-derived school curriculum, their personal identities, together with those of their students, are rooted in their own cultures and traditions. At school, teachers often de-emphasise the values of the students' home cultures, especially if they conflict with the values that the school is trying to promote (p. 3).

The Pacific Islands are filled with rich and diverse culture and history. To institutionally and systematically de-value this heritage would be to stagnate growth and societal functionality. This is why the PRIDE project is incredibly significant. The project rests upon a solid basis of education consultants originally from or familiar with Oceania. These consultants believe in the development of students and their immediate learning community of teachers and families. Furthermore, the PRIDE project ultimately seeks to ensure that students become "lifelong learners". (Teasdale, 2005). Creating "lifelong learners," has clearly become the shared focus across boundaries and borders by those

deeply committed to education and this is exemplified by the efforts of the group Rotaract Samoa.

4.3 Rotaract Samoa

In “Towards Cultural Democracy in Teaching and Learning With Specific References to Pacific Island Nations (PINs)” Konai Helu Thaman (2009) remarks:

If as Lawton (1974) would have us believe, a curriculum is a selection of the best of a culture, then one would think that the content of school and university education in PINs would reflect the cultural agenda and values of PINs especially when it is culture that provides the framework and the lens through which most Pacific people have seen themselves and their world for millennia. Even today, Pacific peoples share worldviews that comprise intricate webs of inter-relationships that provide meaning to, and frameworks for, living and cultural survival. Generally manifested in various kinship relationships, such frameworks not only define particular ways of being and behaving, but also ways of knowing, types of knowledge and wisdom, and how these are passed on and/or communicated to others. Pacific sustainable livelihoods are also linked to cultural survival and continuity and people are keen to pass on to future generations the core values, knowledges and skills of their cultures. In order for schools and curricula to positively respond to the need to make teaching and learning more culturally inclusive, there will be a need for a paradigm shift (Pene, Taufe’ulungaki and Benson, 2002; Johannson-Fua, 2006; Thaman and Thaman, 2009). (p. 3)

Rotary in Action or Rotaract, emerged from the Rotary International youth program, Interact (International and Action) in the late 1960’s and including Samoa, has grown to comprise other Rotaract clubs around the world. Rotaract Samoa is a club for young professionals interested in contributing positively to educational development and the healthy growth of young minds. In Samoa, Rotaract has consistently provided a space for the positive convergence and interaction of Western and Indigenous Identities. Rotaract incorporates and embraces many different cultural identities as well as Western and

Indigenous pedagogies, epistemologies and methodologies. In Samoa, “Rotaractors” (Rotaract members) with the help of the originating Rotary club, seek to contribute to international efforts as well. Although Samoa currently has no Interact club, Rotaract hopes to stimulate interest in developing an Interact club within the next several years.¹⁹

According to Gloria Ladson-Billings, in her article, “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” those that practice a culturally relevant pedagogy, “experience academic success [...] develop and/maintain cultural competence and [...] must develop a critical consciousness” (1995, p.160). As I began to do some preliminary sorting of the data from my Rotaract survey, I discovered that the identities of the Rotaract members share some common themes. These themes support the overall arguments of my dissertation in the following manner:

Learners from multi-perspective backgrounds are creating pathways to include their cultural heritage in their academic identity and in their post-graduation plans.

Samoan graduates that have returned to Samoa and are members of Rotaract can be considered multi-perspective because of their cross-cultural education experiences and their commitment to creating similar opportunities for younger generations.

Samoan multi-perspective graduates can be considered sensitive and this culturally responsive to the needs of their Indigenous culture due to the fact that most incorporate aspects of their identity in their working and communal identities.

Samoan MPCR graduates may have inherent communal culture driven aspirations to contribute to the education and development of younger generations.

¹⁹ A survey given to Rotaract Samoa members on 19 October 2011 helped me to uncover their deeper dedications and understandings of their club’s mission in Samoa.

I believe Rotaract Samoa members, within their participation and creation of education outreach programs and the ways in which they seek to link these programs to career-oriented academic pathways represents a new and developing forward-thinking ethos that emulates the macro-level changes in education taking place in Samoa. Rotaract Samoa members demonstrate a “culturally relevant” pedagogy in response to the way society is changing in Samoa. The members are either from Samoa, or work in Samoa and are in constant contact with Samoans and other Pacific Islanders. Rotaract Samoa members are also ultimately dedicated to a vision of a culturally inclusive education paradigm; at the heart of a culturally relevant pedagogy is “a pedagogy of opposition [...] specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment.” (Ladson-Billings, 1995. p 160).²⁰

All current Rotaract Samoa members (as of May 2012) are graduates of an overseas university, a university in Samoa or a vocational college (high school) either overseas or in Samoa. The occupations of Rotaract members include, a Special Olympics volunteer, Projects officer, a Digicel employee, media designer, web developer, farmer, accountant, civil servant, scientific officer, and finance manager. (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011).

Many “Rotaractors” joined Rotaract Samoa because they thought it was a, “good way to meet people wanting to help the community and also a good way to make new like-minded friends.” (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). When asked to divulge their personal reasons as to why they joined the club, one “Rotaractor”, aged 29 stated, “I

²⁰ In later chapters I will introduce and discuss the term culturally responsive pedagogy, related to culturally relevant pedagogy.

wanted to be a part of something that's bigger than myself [...] to see changes in people's lives." (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). I believe this type of interest from a working professional in creative development is precious and should be institutionally supported and nurtured. When asked what they hoped for the future of education in Samoa, they responded, " [...] that education be more interactive and that teachers teach for the love of it as opposed to the seemingly easy way to chase a pay-check." (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). Some of the goals "Rotaractors" have for their future are, starting their own business, expanding their businesses through the Samoan islands, move into a management role, work for an international organisation, have their own planning consultancy, impact Samoa positively, to someday be someone influential, become a future leader, and build a proper educational centre for youths. (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011).

Rotaract Samoa members involve themselves in many educational outreach programmes such as a national televised academic quiz series, and the managing or coordination of tutoring and writing centre programmes in local high schools, the National University of Samoa a Rotaract Samoa, and more recently, the University of the South Pacific in Samoa. Rotaract has also fostered interest in education through a Career Shadow Day programme whose goal is to introduce youth from urban and rural areas to professional and realistic opportunities in the Samoan workforce, inspire the youth to see themselves as creating pathways to becoming successful, and link academic success to professional success.²¹ Through this programme, Rotaract, provides a framework for the students to

²¹ I chose to elaborate on this programme due to personal participation in its development.

learn about various career options in Samoa by giving them specific learning objectives to pursue while shadowing a professional.

Rotaract Samoa, via Career Shadow Day, seeks to connect students with professionals and provide insight into alternate job options, education pathways and provide students with realistic and readily available career goals. To a majority of “Rotaractors”, the most important current project in Rotaract is, “Career Shadow Day [...] working with young people and being able to share your stories and testimony about your journey to inspire them adds value to the young people.” (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). During Career Shadow day, “Rotaractors” expect student participants to attend the opening meeting wearing a school uniform, shadow their professional for a full day (from about 8:30 am to 4:30 pm) dressed in professional attire and attend the follow up meeting. Student participants also are expected to be inquisitive, interested, and learn as much as possible about their assigned career by fulfilling each learning objective assigned by Rotaract. Finally, students are expected to be on their best behaviour, including dressing appropriately for their job shadowing.

During Career Shadow day, Rotaract expects professional participants to attend the introductory meeting, prepare an agenda for the student on the day they will be shadowing and allow the student to shadow them for a full workday. Professional participants, organisations and businesses also must give a tour of the office and give the student an introduction to the career and the way the organisation functions and answer the student’s questions about the career they are shadowing. At the conclusion of career

day, “Rotaractors” leads all student participants in a presentation activity during the closing meeting where students get to share what they learned, and reflect with other student participants.²² With efforts such as the engineering of a Career Shadow Day, admittedly, a typical Western concept translated through the lenses of oral tradition or “talk story,” narrative instruction and practical learning exposure and immersion, the Rotaract club in Samoa has proven itself to be a forerunner in recognising the power of experiential education.

I did get a chance to be a part of the behind-the-scenes process and work on the committee in charge of Career day in 2012. Due to the fact that the student participants of Career Shadow Day were under 18, I was ethically unable to interview them for commentary. However, below is an excerpt from a letter from teachers involved with Career Shadow Day participants, (personal communication, 23 May, 2011):

Talofa Rotaract

We would like to thank you for giving us the great opportunity [...] Firstly this working experience has given us the knowledge and the skill of how to co-operate with people in order to serve and help them with their needs and wants. As we spend the whole day meeting and collaborating with the members of SUNGO we enjoyed ourselves and we are interested in their work and what they are doing for the people of Samoa. Thank you Rotaract Club for giving us the chance to spend time with different types of organisations. This working experience that you have given to the students that are participating it has been a great learning skill for us students to learn and aim for our future. It has been a lovely opportunity for us to know a lot more about the performance and the capacity that SUNGO has done to serve the people of our country.

Thank you

²² Please see appendices for more information on Rotaract Samoa’s Career Shadow Day and Rotaract survey.

There is an implicit value and importance in youth involvement within the exposure to, the exploration of or the creation of education pedagogy for young people. A “Rotactor”, aged 28, working as an executive officer in Samoa, discussed their hope for the future of education, acknowledging they want to see an “improved and internationally recognised research initiatives and publications, online teaching and learning, quality and highly qualified teachers and a focus on music and sports with computer sciences being developed down the line.” (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). Another “Rotactor,” aged 26, discussed their hope for the future of education in Samoa, they would like to see a, “more inclusive curriculum with more choices for students and more qualified teachers.” (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011). Finally a “Rotactor” aged 29 best sums up the club’s hope what they want to see in the future of education, “[...] schemes in place to develop teachers, scholarship students who come back to Samoa to teach in the schools for the year, Samoa as a research-rich culture, Samoa as a model for the development of Indigenous knowledge, the teaching of Samoan culture and career counselling for students.” (Rotaract Survey, 19 October 2011).

The dedication of Rotaract Samoa members is a commendable example of participatory pedagogy in the formation of an experiential education programme for their predecessors. Due to the presence and example of Rotaract Samoa, a multicultural, multi-pedagogical interactive organisation, the bar for educational experiences and reformations has been set very high. Newcomers to Samoa, like SIT students, interested in similar ways of learning and knowing would indeed benefit from further interaction with and research of this club’s efforts. In the usage of Rotaract’s culturally responsive pedagogy, vis-à-vis the

membership of Samoan locals and returning/reverse-migrating Samoan professionals and academics provides an example of academic success within a Pacific Island Indigenous context. “Rotaractors” have also demonstrated a cultural competence through maintaining a deep and lasting connection to incorporating, and showcasing by personal example and community standing, the importance of a strong academic identity in the youth of Samoa.

Finally, even though “Rotaractors” are not considered traditional teachers, and do not possess any teaching certifications or qualifications, I consider them to be teachers nonetheless, and in a way, more valuable than “conventional” teachers. Gloria Ladson-Billings states,

Culturally relevant teaching does not imply that it is enough for students to choose academic excellence and remains culturally grounded if those skills and abilities represent only an individual achievement. Beyond those individual characteristics of academic achievement and cultural competence, students must develop a broader socio-political consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. (1994, p. 162).

In the expansive “classroom” of Rotaract Samoa, club members and the students that participate in their programmes have co-created a pedagogical space where they can connect to the education transformations, and combat the education issues in Samoa together. Rotaract Samoa is a growing organisation that is an important part of the Samoan community. Rotaract Samoa also stands as a positive example of a proactive

way for a group of multicultural, multi-perspective people to give back to their immediate surroundings and home/host community.²³

4.4 Chapter 4-5 Transition Notes

To be able to witness, study and live within the pedagogical and cultural reformation of a strong Pacific Indigenous community impacted by Westernisation is to be part of a transformation. Cultures that were once considered remote and out of the way, are becoming more and more accessible: both Samoans and Americans are choosing to study in each other's respective countries and gain more familiarity with these societies through immersion programmes. The increasing familiarity and border crossing Western and Indigenous peoples are undertaking has sparked an inter-cultural necessity for deeper cross-cultural understanding, especially for students from a dominant, previously colonially-minded Western culture. Chapter 4 has explored the history of cultural integration and current education reformation tactics. Chapter 5 will examine multi-perspective, culturally responsive students drawn to experiential education programmes located within shifting cultural and educational paradigms.

²³ Many SIT students recently have been reaching out to those involved in Rotaract Samoa, by attending club meetings, interviewing club members and volunteering at club events. I have high hopes that this burgeoning relationship will continue.

Chapter 5

“The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women.” — Booker T. Washington

Chapter 5 provides a framework for the discussion of the emergence of multi-perspective, culturally responsive students in the millennial generation. Section 5.1, “The Millennial Generation” examines the characteristics of this generation that may foster cultural and societal acceptance of blended races and ethnicities in America. Section 5.1 also sets the scene for a discussion on the role multi-perspective, culturally responsive students play in American institutions of education and their corresponding need for culturally responsive education paradigms. Section 5.2, “Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students,” delves into necessity of the refinement of cross-cultural educational relations and the creation of the term “multi-perspective, culturally responsive students.” Section 5.3. “Chapter 5-6 Transition Notes,” provides conclusive thoughts on chapter five and introduces chapter six.

5.1 The Millennial Generation

Pew Research Centre’s, nonpartisan research study of the Millennial Generation created a profile of approximately 50 million, 18-29 year olds in the United States. The Millennial generation refers to those born after 1980 in the United States of America. In 2010, the Pew Research Centre conducted a telephone survey in America of a little over 2000 adults.

An understanding of some of the relevant characteristics of the millennial generation provides a contextual argument for the emergence of multi-perspective, culturally responsive students. Researchers have found that the Millennial are the most racially diverse and thus racially tolerant generation yet, as well being a group of highly creative, self-expressive as well as a better and more educated group. Also, “they’re less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history”. (“The Millennial: Confident. Connected. Open to Change”, 2010).

The Millennial generation includes those who place importance on creative exploration and expression of self in the public and as well as global arena:

They embrace multiple modes of self-expression. Three- quarters have created a profile on a social networking site. One-in-five have posted a video of themselves online. Nearly four-in-ten have a tattoo (and for most who do, one is not enough: about half of those with tattoos have two to five and 18% have six or more). Nearly one-in-four have a piercing in some place other than an earlobe – about six times the share of older adults who’ve done this. (“The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change”, 2010).

For the Millennial generation, tattooing is part of their immediate culture of visibility and self-expression.²⁴ It is important to note the existence of the tattoos because the increase signifies a cultural move to increase self -expression which can sometime lead to self-promotion and self-centeredness. I believe the Millennial generation is also more comfortable with extreme self expression, exemplified through personalising personal

²⁴ I myself have seven tattoos, most of which are symbols from my different cultural backgrounds. I also interpret my tattoos to be symbols of my self-dependence, my willingness to share/broadcast information and level of comfort with my constructed public personality.

technology and the abundance of reality television shows present in today's consumer-driven media.²⁵

This generation is particularly responsive to its complex educational needs due to its mixture of people from different cultural backgrounds. This highly multicultural aspect of this generation, combined with an abundance of different and emerging schooling options being offered in America has societally-constructed an inherent need for culturally relevant and thus responsive teaching methods. Generational dispositions of broadmindedness are invaluable throughout the transformation of a globalising society. The Millennial generation in America continues to prove its acceptance of a multitude of cultures, religions and races due to the generation's plethora of ethnic diversities.

Only about six-in-ten Millennials (61%) are non-Hispanic whites. This is similar to the share among Generation X (62%), but less than that of Baby Boomers (73%) or the Silent generation (80%). The flip side of this measure is that racial and ethnic minorities make up 39% of Millennials and 38% of Gen Xers, compared with just 27% of Baby Boomers and 20% of the Silent generation [...] What distinguishes Millennials, in terms of nativity, is that 11% are U.S.-born children of at least one immigrant parent. That share is higher than for Gen Xers (7%) or Boomers (5%). ("The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change", 2010).

MPCR students undoubtedly surfaced in response to changing demographics in America. Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students are no longer in the minority, they represent the future of the educational profile. This trend suggests a subsequent generational acceptance of other cultural modes of conduct and communication which

²⁵ A sense of entitlement is another characteristic of Millennials, How does this fit with multi-perspective, culturally responsive students? This sense of entitlement represents an untapped, unconscious desire to possess more knowledge of the world intricacies, thus attaining a keen intellectual power that gives the student more of an edge in the job market and more control over expressing personal goals.

ties in with the data that shows a increasing university attendance beyond the attainment of an undergraduate degree.²⁶

The combination of an increase of interest/attendance in/to education also reflects a desire of the Millennial generation to explore both their personal and cultural origins of attitudes, interpretations of history and colonisation as well as shifting identities. Students from the Millennial generation will encounter a plethora of different races, cultures and religions within the duration of their primary, secondary and tertiary times of study. Due to this constant interaction among epistemologies, interplay between pedagogies and familiarity of others' learning methodologies:

The one area in which young people come out ahead is racial tolerance. By a ratio of more than two-to-one, young people are viewed as being more tolerant of races and groups different from their own than the older generation (47% vs. 19%). For the most part, the generations are in agreement on this point: 55% of those under age 30 say their generation is more tolerant, and 37% of those ages 50 and older concur. ("The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change", 2010).

Describing America as a "melting pot of cultures," does not take into account the cultural needs and societal nuances blended ethnicities produce. A national and global recognition of the emerging MPCR student identities within the millennial generation would go a long way towards establishing a perception of these individuals that no longer stems from that which was previously marginalised. An appreciation of emerging MPCR students would also be an acknowledgment of the educational possibilities within a Western

²⁶ Though many believe that is increase in university attendance is also due to a weakening American economy as well as a decreased availability in entry-level or junior professional level job openings.

framework. The culture of a “racial-minority” student would have the potential to be re-interpreted as a global culture, with “grander” meaning and value for all to share.²⁷

5.2 Multi-Perspective, Culturally Responsive Students

In, *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up among Worlds* by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken (2009) provide a description of Third Culture kids.

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (p. 19).

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive (MPCR) students are extremely similar to TCKs, as they are thoroughly affected by globalisation and at some point may encounter educational systems or teachers that have little or no understanding of their complex academic needs.

Millennials exhibit distinct learning preferences identified by Oblinger (2003) and Brown (2000) such as preferring teamwork, experiential activities, structure, and the use of technology. Email and instant messaging are natural communication and socialization mechanisms for teenagers today. To cater to this group of students’ orientation towards teamwork, Howe and Strauss (2003) advise institutions to stress friendship and duty to help others; to showcase groups and team skills; and to prepare for rapid growth in mainstream political and community organizations. (Jonas-Dwyer, 2012, p.194).

²⁷ Working with SIT students has changed some of my initial perceptions of millennial students and made me curious as to the development of their student identity in the second decade of the millennium.

Millennial generation, multi-perspective, culturally responsive academic experiences differ from that of other students because they acknowledge the existence of marginalised identities, willingly explore convergent pedagogical spaces within themselves, and seek out alternative education programs that provide pathways of further simultaneous self and cultural discovery.

The first wave of a new generation of students “the Millennials”, who have been exposed to technology from an early age, have started or are on their way to universities and colleges. Universities are now facing the challenge of catering to three distinct generations of students, the “Baby Boomers” born in the post-war era 1945-1959, the sixties and seventies “Generation-X”, and new students of the “Millennial” generation born in or after the year 1982 (Oblinger, 2003). Current research suggests that the Millennial generation exhibit different characteristics to previous generations, which implies that for this new generation requirements and expectations of the learning environment are likely to be quite unlike that of previous generations (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Oblinger, 2003; Poindexter, 2003; Raines, 2002). (Jonas-Dwyer, 2012, p. 194).

A recent student (personal communication, 2012) from the SIT Fall semester wrote in a letter to me,

SIT gave me the opportunity to step away from my first world mentality and look at the world as less of a ME-centred place. Sure, my individual experiences matter in forming the person I am, but to be on a dot in the middle of an ocean where a beautiful collectivist culture exists puts my tiny existence into perspective. At one point during my stay, a member of my group said something along the lines of, "Isn't it crazy how we are living on a dot on the map," to which I responded, "How is that any different than any other day." This is not to say that I am a thoughtful person with meaningful, deep ideas, it just shows that Samoa helped me see that everyone is a dot on a map, but it is the interactions with those people that make life so special. I was able to live with and interact with one of the most beautiful families I have ever met when we stayed in the village, and I understood 2% of what they were saying. Their love for each other, the land, and their desire to make me feel comfortable in their home allowed me to truly appreciate the beauty of their lives, and of mine.

USP Samoa international students can also be considered MPCR students, as their presence is also a contributing factor to the multicultural dimension of the campus. A Pacific Island student (personal communication, 2012) wrote to me in November,

[...] It is good to be in an environment where we live and learn among students from different countries with different perspectives on education that we can learn from. I am very fortunate to have SIT students here because then I am exposed to a whole new standard of learning.

The main academic interest/reason for Pacific Island student attendance at USP Samoa is for the agricultural courses and practical instruction offered, however on the basis of the long participant observation I conducted on the campus, I also concluded that many of the Pacific Island international students attend USP Samoa for the chance to experience a different cultural pedagogy and student body.

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students willingly explore their feelings invoked by the new people/place/traditions they have encountered, the tangible aspects of their world-view transformation and the types of connections they make with different people/places/traditions.²⁸

[...] School failure—and it is school rather than student failure—is primarily explained by socio political factors. However, structural analyses underestimates the role of culture and discourse practices in linguistic and cultural minority children’s problems in mainstream educational programs. Culture is more than surface developments in opposition to historical and current oppression of minority and immigrant populations, or to an imposed system of education, such

²⁸ I think that this is the best case scenario but I am not sure (based on my personal experiences attending school students from a Native American reservation) that just because students are coming from a “multi-perspective, culturally-responsive” background/identity that they are automatically acknowledging “the existence of marginalized identities” etc. Students sometimes require school systems set up around what Gloria Ladson-Billings calls a “pedagogy of opposition” in order to create a place for this kind of learning/thinking to be fostered. There seems to me to also just be a high possibility of othering/disenfranchisement within traditional school systems that are not supporting this identity in students.

as in the Third World. Rather, culture profoundly shapes the way we think and behave. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 2004, p. 239).

I found this to be true only of multi-perspective, culturally responsive students from the West and Pacific Island/international students on the USP Alafua, Samoa campus. Most also achieve spiritual connections with different people/places/traditions.²⁹

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of living. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7).

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students need to have a place within education systems and curriculum to affirm their identities. They need safe places to facilitate relationships between indigenous and western students, educational programming, curricula and the awareness and dedication of students and teachers can foster communication so that those being nourished in the realm of academia can move beyond racial labelling and societal stereotypes in the classroom.

Today there is much discussion of postmodern, globalizing processes that are undermining and fragmenting people’s experience of culture and of themselves. Many earlier formulations of biculturalism, such as the notion of “walking in two worlds,” evaporate under the contemporary realities of people’s interactions across former cultural boundaries and the emergence of new identities brought about by rapid social change. As Bhaba (1990, p. 207) has pointed out, “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity,” that is in creating a “third space” that enables new cultures and cultural positioning to develop or be constructed (i.e., people’s revising and (re)claiming culture, making new cultures, or variably and intermittently claiming one or more or the cultural or ethnic identities that they embody). In Chaudhry’s (1995, p. 49) phrasing, hybrid

²⁹ One difference here is that my work is with tertiary students for the most part whereas those who work with primary and secondary students, who perhaps do not have the same level of awareness yet, may not be seeing these connections happen or be able to track them.

individuals “exhibit hybrid identities as well as hybrid world-views. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 2004, p.239).

The discussion of intercultural and cross-cultural interactions between teachers and students is essential in the globalising educational environments. Cultures are not as separated as they once were. Technology and transportation have made them more accessible.

[...] People are increasingly growing up in bicultural or multicultural homes, such that situations or contexts may evoke differing senses of cultural identity or belonging. Each of these may genuinely and deeply hold and experienced, and none of them may resemble the mainstream culture in which a person is currently living (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 2004, p.240).

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students may be a mixture of ethnicities, religions and cultures and come from varying economic backgrounds. These students deliberately attend school within a multicultural framework, developing society, or are attracted to these types of frameworks, and learn from combined pedagogy, or experiential education and study abroad programs within different developmental-stage countries. Within a typical western curriculum, students would learn to separate their identity from anything cultural different, thus unconsciously creating a divided identity for themselves.³⁰

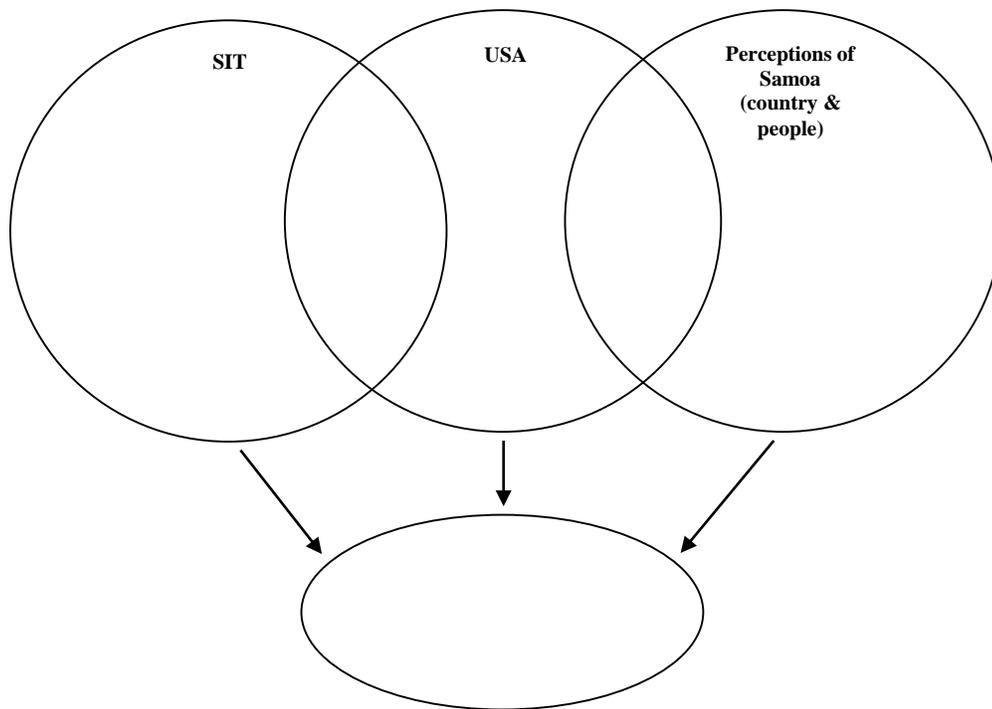
Despite an increasingly diverse population, most people in the United States live in communities with others more alike than different from themselves. Students from these communities arrive at school knowing little of significance about people who are different. Yet their lives are intertwined with these “unknown others” and will become even more so in the future. If we are to avoid intergroup strife and if individuals are to live the highest quality lives possible, we simply

³⁰ What do we do about this? How can schools fight this? Teachers, students and those who work in curriculum development must carefully consider adapting and interweaving elements of culturally relevant and responsive teaching styles for all classrooms. With the emergence of MPCR students, is it even fair to relegate their identities to the margins anymore?

must teach students how to relate better to people from different ethnic, racial, cultural, language and gender backgrounds. These *relational competencies* must encompass knowing, valuing, doing, caring, and sharing power, resources, and responsibilities. Hence, developing sociocivic skills for effective membership in multicultural communities is as important a goal of culturally responsive pedagogy as improving the academic achievement or personal development of students of colour. (Gay, 2000, p.21).

Within an experiential education curriculum, western students and indigenous identities are intentionally thrown together. When SIT students study abroad in experiential education programs they immerse themselves with host country nationals and gain insights into some basic forms of Indigenisation.

The chart over the page illustrates the intersections and layering of SIT student identity while in Samoa. Their host-culture identity as an SIT student, their home-culture identity as an American student, and their initial perceptions and experiences of and in Samoa combine throughout the semester and enhance their multi-perspective, culturally responsive student identity.



This chart reflects MPCR students' interlocked transformation(s). These three elements become a multi-layered learning identity through the recognition and active fusion of their SIT student identity, their home-culture identity and their initial perceptions of their host-culture's identities. During and after their experience in the SIT programme, MPCR students would be able to verbalise the different components of this chart in their own lives and self-reflections, while gradually filling in the blank circles with their perceptions of the programme's cultural convergences.

Multi-perspective, culturally responsive students can clearly benefit from culturally responsive pedagogy in experiential education programs. They must recognise that they have more than one "centre" or learning personality and life-lesson-incorporating axis in their identity. MPCR students push themselves to actively recognise they may have more

than one identity and that their perceptions of experiences operate from within, an academic identity and a non-academic identity.³¹

As participants in the SIT study abroad programme, MPCR students explore their perceptions of their host-country's identity, the economic factors that contribute to the host-country's Indigenous identity, labels/stereotypes the host-culture uses to describe their Western/American identity, similarities between their identity and the identities within the host-culture and ways in which their identity was impacted their experience in the host culture. An SIT student (personal communication, 2011) from the spring semester explains:

The culture of the Pacific is unlike any I have experienced before in my life, and I consider myself well travelled having been to multiple European countries, as well as the Caribbean. The thing I found hardest to get used to upon arrival in Samoa stems from one of the most striking features of Samoan culture in comparison to European/ North American cultures. Many of the houses, especially the more traditional ones, have no walls. Open fale (houses) are the building of choice for families in the villages of Samoa. Given the extremely humid climate, the best design for a house is one in which any breeze can make its way through without obstruction. Thus traditional fale are essentially a floor, short wall or fence along the edge, columns and a roof. In case of rain, there are usually tarps rolled up below the edge of the roof or panels woven from palm fronds to keep the water out. In comparison to the large, multiple-roomed houses with blinds to keep out nosy neighbours that are so common in the US, Samoan fale are very simple. However, aside from being one of the first things I noticed on arrival in Samoa, the fale design also reflects some of the core values of Samoan life that dictate how people interact with each other. Friendliness, respect, and generosity are guiding principles of Samoan behaviour. People trust each other and will invite strangers to share a meal because of the belief that by helping others whenever they can, people will receive help in times of hardship. Those of us on the SIT program discovered this first hand during our "drop-offs". Our academic director would give us the name of a bus to take and tell us to be back on campus in a couple hours to discuss what we did and the interactions we had with Samoans. This was one of the most frightening experiences of my life,

³¹ All students and teachers need to be doing this!

but I survived and even encountered some great people who shared their snacks with me and helped me find a bus back to town. In America, we would be suspicious if a stranger were to offer us food or invite us into their house, but in Samoa that is just what you do. The experience of being amongst people whose culture dictated that they should care for each other was life changing. This is a great example of how the knowledge I gained with SIT went way beyond simply academics. I would not trade this “experiential learning” for anything.

Students from single culture homes and largely homogenous societies are no longer in the majority, especially on the tertiary level. In a letter from an SIT student (personal communication, 2011) from the spring semester, she said:

By simply allowing me to be living in Samoa the SIT program led to many of my positive experiences in the South Pacific. Being with a diverse group of American students in a new country led to many different cultural realizations that allowed me to look at my own culture with different eyes. As someone who comes from a bicultural household, I was excited to find myself in an entirely new culture. One unexpected experience I had towards the middle of my stay had me questioning why I was in Samoa and if it was wrong to be learning about Pacific cultures before I had even really immersed myself in the cultures of my parents. I felt extremely guilty about this and wanted to return home but conversations with a friend and our assistant director helped me to process. I realized that I could still learn from the Samoan culture without neglecting my family's culture, which was important to me. As a student of colour I also had positive experiences with SIT Samoa that were due to the fact that I physically blended in with the Samoan people. During my homestay I had to make the oven for our Sunday meal, help wash clothes and do the dishes. At first I was upset that I had to do these tasks while the other students in my group were told to relax, take a nap or go to the beach. But in the middle of the week I realized that I had a unique opportunity to experience the everyday lives of a Samoan girl my age, which was invaluable.

It has become paramount for academic pedagogies to recognise the different cultural identities of the emerging new generation of students.³²

³² What is at stake for students if this doesn't happen? Education potentially might end up looking like what it did before the American Civil Right's movement and instead of having racially-segregated schools and districts, schools and districts and by extension teachers will be separated by the amount of culturally responsive pedagogy in classroom material... though, haven't we already come to this? And if we continue along this path, as the economic gap continues to close, so will the racial and cultural gap and there will be even more educational inequalities and cultural inequalities in a multicultural society.

5.3 Chapter 5-6 Transition Notes

Chapter 5 discussed traits from the millennial generation that contributed to the background and development of the multi-perspective and multi-cultural aspects of their personalities. Chapter 5 also delved into the possible identities pedagogy-related requirements of these types of students interested in or past/present students of experiential and immersion education paradigms. The next section will explore experiential education and curriculum by analysing World Learning's SIT Study Abroad Samoa program: Pacific Communities and Social Change.

Chapter 6

“Were we to confront our creature hood squarely, how would we propose to educate? The answer, I think is implied in the root of the word education, educe, which means “to draw out.” What needs to be drawn out is our affinity for life. That affinity needs opportunities to grow and flourish, it needs to be validated, it needs to be instructed and disciplined, and it needs to be harnessed to the goal of building humane and sustainable societies. Education that builds on our affinity for life would lead to a kind of awakening of possibilities and potentials that lie dormant and unused in the industrial-utilitarian mind. Therefore the task of education, as Dave Forman stated, is to help us ‘open our souls to love this glorious, luxuriant, animated, planet.’ The good news is that our own nature will help us in the process if we let it.” —David Orr

Chapter 6 begins with, a short story entitled, “Boundaries and Experiential Education,” which gives an overview of some issues experiential program educators may encounter. This short story showcases empirical data in an expressive and explanatory matter. Section 6.1.1, “Story Development” gives a short analysis of the piece. Section 6.2, “Recognising Stereotypes” compares American and Samoan student educational characteristics. Section 6.3 “Cultural Disparities and Flipped Perceptions,” incorporates a discussion of the history of “othering” within Western cultures and moves into an

argument for the importance of the development of more cultural awareness in section 6.4, “Culturally-Responsive Teaching Pedagogy.” Section 6.4.1 “Little Old Lady” shows positive and humorous interactive capabilities of cross-cultural interaction and prefaces section 6.5 “Cultural Baggage,” a discussion of “cultural baggage” students bring. Section 6.6 “Chapter 6-7 Transition Notes” provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 6 and introduces Chapter 7.

6.1 Boundaries and Experiential Education

Karina was in her third week of teaching “Village research techniques” when her students all came down with what the locals referred to as *manava tata*, meaning a terrible situation of the stomach, also known as diarrhoea, but in her case “verbal diarrhoea” because Karina just didn’t know what to say to her students anymore to get them to acknowledge their emotional changes and academic struggles without taking out their frustration on her.

She wondered, aloud, “How do I teach the students I have without teaching to the type of student I was?” She thought to herself for a long moment, picked up her torn cloth bag and house key and started walking towards the door, “Polynesians are always eating, so maybe I’ll take a cultural page from their book and find a way to chew through this... Ha, and that’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve managed to say in Samoa thus far. What a fabulous teacher I’ll make... ugh, no wonder I’m so insecure now.”

Aggie Grey’s

“Oh my god. I was just totally and completely in a rage because I had been sitting in this empty classroom, fuming at their lack of respect and punctuality when I finally realised, something must be wrong if all of them aren’t showing up. I mean I know they weren’t boycotting me - all the brown ones, and the hippie ones enjoyed my personality.”

Karina called her sister Sara in the states every week at the same time. Karina went to the Aggie Grey’s brunch in Apia, Samoa and Sara ordered out, their conversation either getting interrupted by the delivery boy from that great Indian place near Times Square or scones from the bodega down the street.

“Um,” Sara said, “I’m not sure I want to talk about this at brunch, and for that matter, I don’t know how you can say the words, ‘*manava tata*’ and then order a cheese and onion omelette in the same breath.”

“It’s just, that the things I used to do right in the states when I was teaching are completely wrong here... the same goes for the things I did wrong in the states- it’s like everything is switched around and I’m stumbling, trying to reorient my whole teaching philosophy and pedagogy!” Karina cried passionately as the omelette man patiently ignored her with practiced calm and handed her a small plate with her second helping. “*Fa’afetai*, I’ll see you soon,” Karina threatened and then mumbled to herself, “no wonder the students said I was too dramatic in my evaluations.”

Karina plopped down at her wicker seat almost upsetting the piping hot pot of Earl Grey Tea greeting her with its steam. She shifted the phone to her other ear and continued her rant mid-thought. “Well what else was I supposed to do in that situation? She as good as told me that she was two months sober and away from her AA program. And besides, I really felt for her and wanted to support her. No one else, not even my mentor understands the insidious link between racial minorities, the pressure of education and substance abuse. Anything, even listening to her cry at 10pm, taking her for coffee away from the other students and complaining together about the inequality of the economic backgrounds of the other students helped get through uncomfortable group dynamics.” “Allowing her to complain is one thing, but joining in with her is another...” Sara commented reproachfully.

“I know what you mean... and what I constantly ask myself is how to deal with the solidarity I experience as a racial minority teaching a racially mixed class in a developing country within an Indigenous setting? Is this an issue of solidarity or loyalty or something else entirely? The truth is, she never would have opened up to me if I hadn’t acknowledged the same cultural inequities taking place in the microcosm of our classroom. And how could I not spend more time on her? I don’t think education is just about what takes place in the classroom; it’s about teaching to the student’s life as well. Ugh, but I guess I could have been less obvious about it, because I could tell other students were jealous of the time I spent with her- and I know, I know getting close to a student blurs the lines of your relationship but it was personally worth it to see the change my advice and example made in her life... but... but... this is a situation and an

emotional connection that a teacher can't 100% guarantee with all students or replicate. Okay fine... you have a point Sara... what point, I don't know, but it's a point all the same. Thank you."

"Karina, you can't and shouldn't be friends with them, as much as you want to, as familiar as their mannerisms and quirks appear to you. It's just not appropriate however much you miss your American friends and family, your students are not your family or your peers and your treatment of them should be neither a positive or negative reflection of any kinship you may feel for them."

"But then what's the point of "experiential learning"- that's the aspect of our program my mentor and I are constantly discussing, utilising and exemplifying with our lesson plans, excursions and lives. It's why these Americans chose to study abroad in the South Pacific! It's hypocritical to encourage the students to seek and form relationships with 'real' and 'authentic' people and situations if they can't even experience that with their instructors. That's life, liking and disliking people and things and having to deal with the results of those feelings in all types of situations, Sara!"

Sara interjected, stabbing her fork into the cold air of her New York studio, "But what about burning out? If you won't consider the possible negative results of not having strict emotional boundaries, then it won't take long to burn out. And you've clearly seen that paying too much attention to one particular student, even a recovering alcoholic, can

create supposed divisions and phantom alliances within a group- however small or large. Those kinds of things tend to happen when you let down those emotional walls.”

Sara sighed fretfully, took a bite of chicken *tikka masala* and then said to Karina, “It’s a matter of finding a balance, which I know you know and something every teacher struggles with at some point. You wilfully, deliberately have to conceptualise a pedagogy that supports and is sensitive to the static anchor role of the teacher and the moody fluctuations of the students in a dynamic Indigenous culture. I’m giving you that assignment for homework.”

Karina’s Assignment: “How to set and keep emotional boundaries when you’re teaching Americans using experiential education pedagogy in an Indigenous context”

Lesson one: Setting emotional, physical and social boundaries between teacher and students during field study is essential for a young teacher’s sanity and chance at further employment.

Lesson two: Brown teachers should never show their concern for brown students the other white students’ presence, as this will be interpreted as favouritism.

Lesson three: Laughing at comments made by over-privileged students might be seen as just plain mean.

Lesson four: Never go to one birthday party unless you can go to all the birthday parties.

Lesson five: Common sense to one person isn't necessarily common sense to another person.

Lesson six: Don't be afraid to relish special bonds with students when they happen because those connections will make the odd bad review sting less, or because the odd bad review really doesn't matter.

Lesson seven: Create a system of support outside of your students and don't give up even if it ends up taking you five months and the support comes from random people or people you have already judged.

6.1.1 Story Development

In *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, the author Bagele Chilisa (2011) states:

The Western academic discourse has its own rules on what can be said and written, how it can be said and written, where it can be written, by whom, and for whom. Similarly, from the researched perspective, postcolonial indigenous discourses on the production of knowledge have their own rules on what can be said, who is allowed to say it, where and when it can be said, whether it can be written, by whom and for what purpose. The end results in two parallel knowledge systems, each with the power to filter knowledge that eventually reaches the public domain. There is no doubt that what we know based on the research we carry out with postcolonial subjects and indigenous peoples is a product of the power struggle between the two knowledge systems, with each using its power to control and shape what is eventually said. What is the role of academic institutions in integrating these parallel knowledge systems? (p. 293).

I decided to include this short story in my dissertation because I wanted narrative representative of the struggles an educator may experience trying to come to term with how to work with MPCR students. “Boundaries and Experiential Education” was written after I received my first round of teaching and programming critiques. I read a lot of Bell Hooks’ books while in Samoa, and re-read passages from *Teaching to Transgress* to keep me going at some difficult points. I can honestly say, no one is really a fan of critique, and sometimes students can be quite harsh as well as unaware of crossing undefined pedagogical boundaries. I cannot deny that the act of guiding younger individuals through new experiences in a different cultural setting was an evolving version of my own learning experiential education program. What I found after several months with SIT, was that our MPCR students were more than once, quite spot-on in their observations of teaching styles, moods, and headspaces.

Some boundaries are necessary, but sometimes it was necessary to break through the boundaries of students inter-culturally and intellectually, placing them deliberately in uncomfortable situations. This is also a hallmark of a job that works with MPCR students. We were with our students almost every day of the week. We spent more hours with the students than with our friends and families, and the student experience was mutual. At that point one must be prepared for some emotional drama, uncomfortable experiences of one’s own, and some amazing and lasting student-teacher bonds that go beyond the classroom into real life.

I must give some serious credit to my former academic director for continuing to support and believe in my growth as a person and teacher. It is because of the role she played as an educator and mentor in my life that I was able to verbalise many of the experiences I had as an MPCR student myself, and as a teacher of second-generation MPCR students in Samoa. I've never felt more in sympathy with teachers who try to find creative ways to deal with those "challenging" students. Also, as a "challenging" student myself, I've never apologised more to a mentor for past behaviour than I did working as her assistant.

6.2 Recognising Stereotypes

A recent SIT student wrote to me saying:

And of course, being in Samoa and experiencing being "foreign" and a minority for the first time led me to reflect a lot on my life experiences thus far and what I wanted my future to look like. I realized that I could not be content going back home and never leaving it again. I began to crave adventure and almost look forward to situations that I knew would push me outside of my comfort zone. I learned so much about my values and what makes me unique, and came back home feeling like I had really grown into myself. Being almost constantly forced out of my comfort zone in my SIT program challenged me to stretch my image of what I am capable of and to gain confidence in my abilities and in who I am. (Personal Communication, Fall 2012)

Between two groups of different historical and cultural backgrounds, the danger of misunderstandings and assumptions will always be present. In "Deep Culture Pushing the Epistemological Boundaries of Multicultural Education," the authors state,

Even in anthropological research, the representation of the world's cultures has often been superficial, and has contributed to the "Othering" of non-Anglo-Euro-American peoples. "Othering" refers to the process of turning people who are the subjects of research into objects and distancing them from nonmainstream selves (Yeatman, 1994). In this process, "Others" are defined as inherently different from the observer and the observer's culture. Rather than embracing the creative and positive possibilities of cultural diversity, "Othering" is concerned with ruling in certain kinds of human being-ness and ruling out other kinds, so as to narrow what is socially acceptable. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 2004, p.238).

The characteristics of Western and Indigenous students may contrast/conflict as they begin experiential interaction. A student recently wrote to me,

Spending a semester living at a foreign university helped me put my own education in perspective. Comparing the differences between what subjects are emphasized at my college versus USP, as well as how classes are conducted and the kind of work expected from students showed me how different education is across the world. Many of the Fijian students I was living with were studying agriculture because their families asked them to, and they expected to be able to support their families with their degree. This is very different than my own experience, as my parents had little say over my choice of major, and the need to support them has never been part of my academic plans. I believe I am very lucky to be in the situation I am, but I also believe it was very important for me to realize (and see first-hand) that the goals of education are not the same around the world. SIT's bicultural environment gave me first hand experience in a culture outside my own, and has helped me see my own Western point of view as only one of many in the world. (Personal Communication, 2012).

The table over the page identifies some of the common stereotypes that describe the socially accepted and assumed perceptions educators and students may have of each other before they embark on an experiential learning program.

American SIT Students	Samoans and USP Students
- Compete with one another	- Natural cultural willingness to help one another
- Have not often needed to communicate in more than one language	- Have bilingual skills/communication
- Culture/society expects an individual to be self-reliant.	- Culture/society expects individuals to work for and contribute to the common good
- Critical thinking and questioning skills are encouraged and expected at a young age	- Critical and analytical thinking not encouraged in cultural contexts
- Overwhelming need to succeed in academics with the highest test score results	- Often content with passing or “getting through” school
- Culture/society supports and encourages formation of individual personalities and identities	- Identity is relational based on community, and intergenerational families.
- Academia controls student and teacher’s perceptions and pre-conceptions of knowledge	- Culture controls student and teacher’s perceptions and pre-conceptions of knowledge
- Education tracks, tests and measures intelligence and skill level.	- Educational diagnostics are not always available
- Knowledge is hoarded.	- Sharing knowledge is a cultural necessity for traditions to survive / generosity/and sharing (food and resources) are culturally ingrained
- Families plan far for the costs of university education or have the resources sent to send children to school	- Educational systems do not allow all students to continue to tertiary education.
- Students use their educational qualifications to enhance their own lives.	- Exam results/ scholarship offers determine who continues and sometimes the fields of study.
- Classroom and study time follow a meticulous schedule with access to teachers is within “office hours”	- Class and study schedules are fluid; family, cultural, religious obligations are often priorities so students often miss class.

Acknowledging these differences and the ways in which both Western and Indigenous people may have consciously or unconsciously adopted and adapted them, gives students a safe academic space to explore and consequently expel any cultural stereotyping they may be practicing within the classroom. This is an immensely powerful activity for multi-perspective, multicultural students within experiential education programmes. It encourages self-analysis, cultural understanding while encouraging students to take a

fresh and more honest look at the judgements their home-culture may be mirroring. This comparison also puts cultural behaviours and attitudes into perspective, allows constructive self and cultural critiquing and creates a space for proactive cross-cultural discussion and activism.

A Pacific Islander student at USP, Alafua, Samoa writes:

Being a foreign student in a foreign country makes you lose yourself sometimes. It is especially challenging when it comes to study. In my country, women have short-term goals where straight after high school they think it's time to start a family and work. Not all women see themselves as capable to achieve so many in continued education. When introduced to SIT students, I see a great difference in their beliefs. They are mostly motivated to work and achieve higher standards of education. In my country, we are mostly dependent on parents or family for survival if we do not have jobs. But these students showed that they wanted to be independent from their families. This is what motivates me, the struggle to be your own key to survival. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

In the Pacific, as it is in America, normal cultural and education practices often regulate cultural characteristics into categories, or label them with perceived differences. This is a practice that, until recently has been widely socially acceptable. Educators have come to realise these distinctions, however they can sometimes also be self-reinforced which is why it is important for those who are considered racial minorities, of Indigenous heritage and those who empathise with traditionally marginalised identities to recognise and confront these stereotypes within academic institutions and within themselves.

Typically those who are “Othered” are people of colour, immigrants from the Third World, or people who have been marginalized by sexual identity or orientation, gender, or disability. “Othering” is accomplished by those who position themselves as white (essentially male) middle-class mainstream persons. Mainstream cultural patterns constitute the Dominant Interpretive Framework (Ulichny & Watson-Gegeo, 1989) that controls and guides socialization,

language, and discourse, information flow, the representation and creation of knowledge, expected behaviour and self-presentation, and procedures for interpreting meaning in the classroom. Teachers and mainstream students collaborate in (re) creating and maintaining the Dominant Interpretive Framework that is part of the process of “Othering” and disenfranchising nonmainstream students, and which leaves little or no room for the expression of non-mainstream interpretive frameworks. (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 2004, p. 238).

Samoans, Pacific Islanders and Americans have been locked in this unfortunate battle of “othering” each other for generations. However, with the emergence of Indigenous-controlled education paradigms, how much do cases of “othering” reflect accurate cultural and education growth when within Samoa? Emma Kruse Va'ai (2011) states in her chapter, “Dynamism and Resilience: Samoan Social Structures and Cultural Change,”

An examination of Samoan society and its post-colonial history provides extraordinary evidence of that appropriating dynamic which enables it to absorb a wide variety of colonising influences in virtually all areas of life. The social structure, law, religion, stories and performances all reveal a society able to adapt a wide variety of cultural practices with resilience and flexibility. Partly because of the strength of its structures but also because of the protean nature of its social dynamism, the force of imperial discourse was absorbed with remarkable adaptability into many aspects of Samoan life. (p. 22).

6.3 Cultural Disparities, Similarities, Subcultures and Differences

Due to the influence of ideas surrounding social hierarchy and “class” in America, subsequent negative attitudes and cultural and racial profiling tendencies may have been inherited. America’s long standing involvement with British and European countries and cultures has exposed Americans to interpretations of what is “low” and “high” class. Assigning levels through the labelling of low/negative and high/positive identities to society is evidence of a “functioning” Western social hierarchy. While this belief still has some validity in modern day American culture, many young Americans fail to realise that

hierarchical ideologies in America have evolved over time and become integrated with Indigenous, minority and other subcultures America has colonised or come into contact with. In Samoa, young Americans enrolled in SIT Study Abroad are taught identify social and cultural niches where societal adaptation has taken place.

As part of the process of integration and the emergence of the new society, the ruling classes of the South Pacific are increasingly culturally homogenous: they speak the same language, which is English... they share the same ideologies and the same material life styles... The privileged classes share a single dominant regional culture; the underprivileged maintain subcultures related to the dominant one through ties of patronage and growing inequality. These localized subcultures are modified versions of indigenous cultures that existed before the capitalism penetrated the South Pacific. Scholars and politicians often point to the enormous diversity and persistence of traditional cultures in the South Pacific as a factor for disunity and economic backwardness at the national and regional levels. (Hau'ofa, (2008) p. 13).

Cultural disparities between Western and Indigenous, American and Pacific Island sites exist.³³ SIT students discover that in the Pacific,

Among the privileged there is homogeneity throughout the region through the sharing of a single dominant culture. Variations among these homogenous groups are minor in character: the differences largely add spice to social intercourse as Chinese, Indian, Lebanese and other exotic dishes make bourgeois dinner parties more interesting. It is one of the privileges to the affluent classes to have access to a wide range of superficial cultural experiences and expertise; it is the privileged who can afford to tell the poor to preserve their traditions. (Hau'ofa, 2008, pp. 13-14).

Students from different socioeconomic backgrounds need to experience, recognise and understand the ways in which disenfranchisement is fostered through Western attitudes and thus adopted by those few wealthy families, politicians and policy-makers directly “related” and benefiting from capitalist ventures stemming from globalisation. Students in the SIT Samoa program engage with a variety of local speakers, policy makers, and

³³ This statement also refers to the Samoan Islands.

development and aid officials on both grassroots and national levels during their stay in Samoa.

For students to be able to explore aspects of continuity and discontinuity in another culture outside the context of America provides another layer in the on-going discussion of the transformation of cultures. If more students, from both the minority and dominant racial cultures in America could experience learning moments such as these, students would re-evaluate their societal choices, and include a deeper cultural sensitivity in their decision-making. In a recent letter one student wrote:

I was supposed to volunteer on the campaign, but after being in Samoa I have had a hard time buying into American Politics like I did before.³⁴ I feel disheartened by how petty the two opposing parties can be and that money is often prioritized over the well being of people. I think the US could benefit greatly from the compassion that is widespread in Samoa. If everyone treated each other better in the United States, then perhaps we would not have to rely so desperately on a broken government to solve the problems of our broken society.... While I don't have any immediate plans to return, I definitely carry Samoa with me each and every day through the way I perceive the world and how I carry out my relationships with other people. Re-entry is definitely still happening for me. It's overwhelming, but I wouldn't have it any other way because that means that I was outside my comfort zone, which I also like to call the growth zone (Personal Communication, November 2012),

This vantage point also has the ability to holistically “show” the influence of Western ideology as far afield as Samoa, and the Pacific. Hau’ofa goes on to say,

In recent years there has been mounting concern with the relevance of the academic and urban orientation of general education in island communities. Despite this concern nothing really substantial has been done to revise educational curricula apart from adding greater local content to the existing forms... Alternatives to the present forms of education can only be effected if the economy is radically altered, which is highly unlikely, or if a dual education system is introduced—that is, the present emphasis will be reserved for the privileged while more rural and technically oriented curricula are devised for the poor. Neither alternative is politically acceptable, at least publicly, although a form of dual

³⁴ Student is referring to the 2012 American Presidential election.

system is emerging in Papua New Guinea, and Fiji, the two most economically advanced communities in the islands. (2008, p.15).

I would argue that, instead of seeking only to “add more local content” SIT Samoa uses convergence methodology to integrate, both Western influences and Indigenous traditions in order to equalise and enhance student exposure and experience in Samoa. However, Hau’ofa argues that,

There are already exclusive “international” schools in these communities, schools that are oriented towards giving children of the ruling classes advantages in training for lucrative positions in the regional economy. The same is true of rural universities; The University of the South Pacific, for example, is probably the leading manpower factory in the islands. These needs are defined for the university by island governments and private organizations—the very institutions that are spearheading the integrative development. As such, the university is an arm of the ruling classes in the region; under present circumstances it cannot be anything else (2008, p.15).

SIT’s experiential education program debunks Hau’ofa’s claims about USP being nothing more than an extension of the ruling class. Both SIT students and certain members of USP Samoa staff have found that the shared multicultural and multi-perspective learning environment is open to embracing people from new cultural and pedagogical education styles, and finding ways to incorporate them within the growth of its campus. Hau’ofa (2008) goes on to remark “The degree to which integration has been achieved has not been acknowledged by the component communities of the region—“ (p.18).³⁵ Epistemological and pedagogical transformations are currently occurring right now in Samoa, and SIT Samoa is affected by it and encourages students to form an awareness of these transformations within its programme. Hau’ofa then postulates, “It is probably true to say that no major geographic region in the world is as integrated as the South Pacific.

³⁵ Which focuses more on issues of policy and economics.

We are, for all practical purposes, a single economy and increasingly single society. (2008, p. 11). Hau'ofa's words are indicative of a more complex relationship the South Pacific possesses and students traveling to this part of the world must find pathways to acknowledge the people they will encounter. The same onus is also on Pacific peoples if they want to be able to compete better in an integrated classroom. This learning relationship needs to become a relationship of equals, and an effective methodology for would have to provide culturally responsive teaching ideology that benefit blended classrooms.

6.4 Culturally Responsive Teaching Pedagogy

“Little old lady” is short story that reports and analyses some observational data creatively processed through eyes of student experiences. This story was written in reaction to some SIT students' reactions to seeing graves in front of Samoan houses. In Samoa, families bury their dead in front of their houses as a way to show respect to those who have passed on as well keep them a part of the family. Family is the axis on which Samoan culture rests. Family is integral to a Samoan's daily life structure, religious dedication, education and career aspirations. “Little Old Lady” was also created from issues presented via description-interpretation-evaluation formatted journal entries by my students and personal experiences in several traditional Samoan family settings. “Little Old Lady” offers a glimpse of a decidedly different treatment and reverence, as well as a visible presence, for a society's elderly population.

“Little Old Lady,” on the surface, is about cultural communication, but as the story progresses, it also ends up being about self-communication. Not only have my students and I shared westernised fear of ageing, but also a fear of not knowing what to do or how to interact with the elderly. “Little Old Lady,” considers how experiential teaching methodology can convey lessons in attitude, judgment, assumptions and perceptions during the personal interactions. Furthermore, this short story encourages one to consider the fears and attitude of the narrator towards the elderly, how the Samoan host family’s perceptions differ, and the types of cultural communication and interactions that encouraged conversation between the little old lady and the narrator.

6.4.1 Little Old Lady

For three hours, in the morning I sit with an old lady. She’s 94 and tiny and her fingers are delicate lace patterns that the shadowy sun traces between the window louvers as it weaves its peace.

She only speaks Samoan. I only speak English. She puts her hands on her head to let me know how to smooth her hair away from her brow. I love her and neither she nor I know how to pronounce each other’s names.

I know she’s talking to me when she says, “*keine, palagi*.” I know she likes me, or at least doesn’t mind my presence because she says, “*keine, palagi*” with a smile on her thin rose-petal lips. Everything about her but her feet is fragile and tiny. Her arms are two long and languorous stems from a banyan tree. Her hands fan out from her wrists like

precious greens shoots of leaves from the tops of bamboo. Her eyes are two dark pearls that want to tell me stories or tell me that she needs to go to the toilet. Her hair is long long long and smells like pineapple. And her feet, her glorious feet that can no longer walk are absolutely humongous. Broad plains, veins and creases and roads crisscross again and again on the robust flesh of her feet.

I was a bit scared of her at first; or rather I was scared at the idea of her and how old she was and the fact that from her bed she has a glimpse of her sister's grave in front of the *fale*.

I didn't know what to say to someone that old. I didn't know how to say or do anything that would make either her or me feel less awkward.

I avoided looking directly at her too. It was like my mind couldn't fathom someone that old and that visible outside of a nursing home. And she didn't smell either. She's too small to smell like anything at all. This observation, I know, may seem cruel, but I'm used to the smell of antiseptics and the sight of bodies wasted away on government-grade morphine and institutional inattention.

As I watch her, and guard her daytime sleep from flies, I find myself so in awe of where she has been and where she is going. And, she likes to sleep with one hand in the air, gently swaying like a bent piece of cloth high atop a flagpole.

“*Keine, palagi,*” she calls, her voice like faded green threadbare velvet worn by royalty fallen on hard times. “*Keine, palagi!*” I go to her, my smile genuine and almost too big for my face. I don’t know why, but I find myself exaggerating my facial expressions in this theatre of languages and bodies. “Tea, do you want some tea?” I hold up her cup of lukewarm tea that I made myself slide a red straw I pocketed at MacDonald’s in it.

“*Leai,*” she says, and coughs, and runs the tips of her fingers along the feathery tips of her eyelashes. The wind blows the door of her empty bedroom shut. Her daughter told me that she hasn’t slept in her bedroom for almost six years. She sleeps in the family room, where she has a good view of the television and the couches where her one grandchild sits and does her homework after school.

I get up and gently shut the door by wedging a twist of old newspaper into the space where the lock should be. The old lady pulls on one fine and silky-white chin hair. She smiles at me, and I count the three stained teeth she still has left. I sit down on the floor and then get up quickly when she exclaims loudly in Samoan and points at a blanket. She doesn’t like me to sit on the floor without sitting on a blanket. She’s afraid I’ll catch a cold. In fact, everyone in her family constantly fears me getting sick. From floors, from swimming *i le sami*, from working, from walking, from going to the movies with the Samoan boys that ask me.

The first time I sat with her, I was getting over a terrible bout of the flu. I usually only came into the main house for *to’ona’i* or to read the paper after I got back from work. On

this particular day however, I came stumbling down the drive from my little *fale* at the back, and my landlady took one look at me, dragged me into the house, and cooked me chicken soup from scratch. And when I say scratch, I mean I saw her almost get scratched by the chicken before she broke its neck, plucked it, cleaned it and chopped it up for our breaky. After I ate, a bed was made for me next to the little old lady, and I laid down in it, too sick to be apprehensive about catching, “oldness.”

I woke up some hours later, the household was at work, and I turned over and the little old lady was staring at me. My phone fell to the floor, buzzing with a message. I picked it up, stared with bleary eyes and read the message from one of my friends: *did you know that it is physically impossible for you to lick your elbow?!* I scoffed and texted back that it couldn't be true, wagered five *tala* that I could, and immediately tried to lick my elbow in my delirium of illness. I couldn't. I couldn't lick my elbow! Great, now I would have to pay up. I could barely stretch my tongue beyond my lips and bend my arm far enough let alone lick my elbow.

And oh great, great, great, the little old lady's face was trembling and I'd completely frightened a poor, harmless soul. I prepared myself for a scream, and-and then she burst out into a truly fabulous full-bodied laugh. I looked at her askance, shrugged my shoulders and began to chuckle.

“*Manuia le malologa,*” I say to my little old lady's sleeping form. One of her hairs blows over the book I am holding. I pinch it carefully between my thumb and forefinger before

I release it. The hair is the colour of fresh frangipani on grey bark, and this is the best part of my day.

6.5 Cultural Baggage

The previous short story explored the way someone from a Western culture perceives one of the most basic experiences human being share, the process of ageing. The epistemic pathways in which two different cultures might interpret a situation might stem from a set of societal attitudes, also known as cultural baggage.

As the higher education paradigm shifts from teacher-centered to learning-centered classrooms, so do the styles of communicating information to students. Educators provide the platform and mechanism for learning by effectively reaching students with content. In the past, content has been delivered with a traditional focus. The instructor was the “sage on stage” and completely controlled the learning environment by delivering content through lectures often using PowerPoint slides. Instructors using this type of delivery style will encounter more difficulty in reaching today’s college students.⁷

Reaching this generation requires educators who better understand their audience and work in collaboration with their audience, using a variety of instructional delivery methods to engage students within their own learning process. Knowing the type of student entering the didactic and clinical classroom is critical. (Monaco & Martin, 2007, p. 43)

SIT students bring with them beliefs and fears from their home culture. An American’s cultural baggage contains some of the most recognisable “packaging” because of the strength of American ethnocentricity and/or nationalism. An American student’s cultural baggage is uniquely located somewhere between their apathetic cultural perceptions and

experiences of lesson and content. Cultural baggage encompasses a student's ways of thinking and behaving. Many American students are used to the traditional lecture and learn format.³⁶ The lesson comes from one teacher, the authority in the classroom, and although there may be room for discussion, the student does not participate in the control or agenda of the lesson. The student is also not expected to help in the construction of the lesson or the presentation. Thus, the student develops a unique form of academic ethnocentrism throughout the many layers and levels American university education.³⁷

An SIT alumnus explains,

I participated in the SIT Pacific Island Studies seminar nearly ten years ago in Fall 1999 as a junior [...] My experience was exceptionally different than those of many of my friends who had participated in larger study abroad programs, even some through SIT. We felt that we had really become a part of the community, and we were exposed to aspects of Samoan culture and traditions on a level that is impossible in places where study abroad programs are more routine and commonplace. The Samoa program offers exactly what SIT as an organization promises—hands-on experiential learning, in-depth immersion in local culture and the chance to develop meaningful and lasting relationships, and a growing awareness of local and regional issues in the Pacific islands that have broader global impact

Beyond the personal ways in which this program was meaningful and life-changing for me as an individual, I believe that the SIT Pacific Island Studies seminar is critically important on a programmatic and educational level. First, this is a vast section of the world that too often gets overlooked and ignored in American education—unfortunately this trend has been repeated in most alternative educational programs, and the SIT course is the only one of its kind that I have ever found. (Personal Communication, May 2009).³⁸

³⁶ It is difficult to really define and pinpoint the identity of a “typical” American student, or even a “typical” SIT student for that matter. Thus I am extrapolating from my research and student experiences to get a generalized/broad identity. Also it is important to note student identity is fluid and changes with each generation due to societal and economic factors.

³⁷ American universities are also changing. Some of the students do come from more progressive schools that design their own majors and learning is much more interactive.

³⁸ Personal communications from May 2009 are excerpts from letters written by SIT Samoa alumni when the program was under threat of closure. The letters were influential in having the programme re-opened so that it continues today. These communications were shared with me personally by the Academic Director.

Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni, former Senior Research Fellow with the Centre for International Health at the University of Otago, in her address to the National University of Samoa (NUS), entitled, “In search of Chutzpah: Academic health research and research capacity building in Samoa,” remarked,

It is in my view the role of a university to inspire both wonder and rigour through a continual search for wisdom using methodologies and pedagogies [i.e. research and teaching tools] that have as their fundamental premise principles of respect for ourselves, for each other, for our environment and ultimately for God. (2011).

The concepts of traditional and experiential classrooms vary in numerous ways. The philosophy of experiential education incorporates several basic principles within the curriculum.³⁹ Experiential education programs help students learn to adapt their behaviour when appropriate or necessary while allowing them to take pride in their personal growth and identities by processing the blending of their experiences into stories of transformation. This helps students to focus on the similarities between cultures and facilitates relationships between Western and Indigenous people, encouraging conversations and interactions outside class and organising shared cultural excursions. Discussing students’ values related to their American identity, multicultural, indigenous-heritage, and identity of their host country advances and deepens their interactive, MPCR multi-perspective, culturally responsive student identity. Establishing that students want to learn about their host culture and what the hosts want to learn from students promotes an inclusive experience.⁴⁰

³⁹ My personal experience as a student and an academic coordinator in/of an experiential education programme helped me to solidify and verbalize these thoughts on experiential education.

⁴⁰ Which are actually the second and third goals of Peace Corps

SIT Samoa's experiential education practices can be viewed through the lens of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Culturally responsive teaching makes academic success a non-negotiable mandate for all students and an accessible goal. It promotes the idea, and develops skills for practicing it, that students are obligated to be a productive member of and render service to their respective ethnic communities as well as to the national society. It does not pit academic success and cultural affiliation against each other. Rather academic success and cultural consciousness are developed simultaneously. (Gay, 2000, p.36).

Race and culturally segregated identities are used in some traditional American classroom setups where the lecturer and textbooks serve as the authority and students are ideological followers. Dominant American society has given specific identity labels for race and culture in order to produce obedience and formulate roles. This has led to a sociological disconnect between the people who are many in numbers, the working class that has no power, and the select few that control the world's resources through economics. Socioeconomic discourse is an incredibly dangerous viewpoint to operate from in a static arena of traditional Western education practices. Gay (2000), in *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice* remarks,

Learning experiences and achievement outcomes for ethically and culturally diverse students should include more than cognitive performances in academic subjects and standardized test scores. Moral, social, cultural, personal, and political developments are also important. All of these are essential to the healthy and complete functioning of human beings and societies. If education is, as it should be, devoted to teaching the whole child, then this comprehensive focus should be evident throughout curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (p. 16).

Culture and the journey one takes within and without of their home culture should be the language of education, not ideological hierarchy. American student identity is not one-

dimensional, it is multi-layered and multicultural, similar to the student identity in SIT Samoa. American education programmes and universities need to adjust their curricula:

Fostering this comprehensive scale of development for culturally diverse students in U.S. schools should take place within a framework of ethical values and multiple cultural perspective because “every age, in every significant situation, in every conceivable way” (J. Gardner, 1984, p. 125) has to re-create itself [...] Therefore, just as students should be seen as multidimensional and contextually diverse, so should techniques routinely used to assess their performance in schools. (Gay, 2000, p. 16).

Experiential education programmes expand student psyches mostly/predominantly within a developing, minority or Indigenous culture because the socioeconomic and ideological growth is evident and more accessible in the usually microcosmic daily operations. Conceptualising each individuals’ cultures as expansive spaces allow students to discover possible similarities. Experiences lead to a more holistic and thorough connection with multi-layered, American students’ developing characters. Furthermore, student “developing” ethos’ can, in theory learn perfectly within a “developing” country.

SIT’s experiential education programme in Samoa encourages students to experiment with a fluid and dynamic inclusive cross-cultural identity, rather than a co-dependent binary between Americans and locals. This leads me to believe that SIT Samoa’s programme represents a proactive and inclusive model in the creation of positive and holistic education experiences. An SIT alumnus letter describes a lasting impact of their experience,

I am an alumnus of Samoa’s fall 1997 semester and discovered the program while searching for a more meaningful post secondary experience. The opportunity to be immersed in South Pacific island culture has had immeasurable and lasting impact on who I am and who I will be. Experiencing Samoa and witnessing the early effects of media and consumerism on a largely subsistence based society

increased my awareness of materialism and caused me to examine what is truly meaningful in life. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

Throughout the programme, students are put into situations where they must find ways to adapt and integrate their ways of knowing within the context of Samoan culture and the culture of the USP campus. The techniques of experiential education stimulate communication beyond the classifications of gender, class, religion and sexuality. Students have to grapple with concepts beyond their familiar home cultures and American prejudices and recognise an existence outside of their personalities. Participating in a curriculum that teaches students the value of Indigenous identity also helps them recognise the similarities in their vulnerabilities and strengths they discover in the programme.

[...] Culturally responsive teaching is [...] at once a routine and a radical proposal. It is routine because it does for Native American, Latino, Asian American, African American and low-income students what traditional instructional ideologies and actions (do) for middle-class European Americans. That is, it filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through their cultural frames of reference to make content more personally meaningful and easier to master. It is radical because it makes explicit the previously implicit role of culture in teaching and learning, and it insists that educational institutions accept the legitimacy and viability of ethnic-group cultures in improving learning outcomes. (Gay, 2000, p. 26).

SIT Samoa's experiential curriculum incorporates an awareness of its American student's varied home-cultures, values, and ethnicities. The SIT program creates a shared cultural consciousness within and without the academics of the experiential education "classroom." Gay (2000), quoting Carlson (1976) states, "One of the most powerful benefits to be derived from a culturally pluralistic educational paradigm is 'the creative

ability to approach problem-solving activities with a built-in repertoire of bicultural perspectives [...] (p. 29). SIT students soon realise that “race” not only is one way of interpreting someone’s experiences, but sometimes murky and biased, an SIT student from 1999 remarks:

I still thumb through my Lonely Planet guide and longingly recall the lessons I learned in Samoa--not only how to craft a quality research project, but also how to treat other people, to make the most of what we have, to value community and cooperation, and most importantly, to recognize the diversity of human experiences and to pay attention to lives, cultures, and human experiences not commonly thought about stateside. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

Operating within an American sense of “race” divides and denies a holistic view of a student’s shared existence with the host culture and common ways of learning and living.

Cultural responsibility can be recognised only through context.

While ethnic content has the potential to stimulate intellectual curiosity and make meaningful contact with ethnically diverse students, it should be combined with instructional strategies that emphasize inquiry, critique, and analysis, rather than the traditional preferences for rote memory and regurgitation of factual information. (Gay, 2000, p. 30).

Students need to understand that basic classroom knowledge is one-dimensional and limited within the context of a dominant, stationary American institution. Students have the power to be whole and not fragmented pieces of an ethos, or mode of discussions and existence; students are more than sound, wounds, and fury; they are players in the flesh as well as the writers of their life experiences. Experiential education takes an American student beyond racialised and polarised events because its curriculum does not separate itself from the host culture. This type of curriculum requires a student to reconcile their American identity and individuality with an Indigenous culture.

Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches, *to and through* the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioural expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (Gay, 2000, p. 31).

SIT Samoa places the student directly in a multicultural environment, within a developing host country-culture. SIT's experiential education practices create links across cultures and ideas. Experiential education helps students connect and re-evaluate their American ideologies. Experiential education teaches a shared responsibility of student and host culture. By repositioning American students with their perceptions, into a developing and/or Indigenous culture, experiential education facilitates a juxtaposition of ideologies. Experiential education supports a fusion of modern sensibilities and traditional compassion. Culturally responsive teaching

[...] Is contingent on a set of racial and cultural competencies...seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies and relationships with students: challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism and other forms of intolerance, injustice..." (Gay, 2000, p. 31).

The experiential education curriculum of SIT Samoa fosters various types of intercultural interactions and bi-cultural awareness and growth. Experiential education refuses to sustain the stereotype of helpless Indigenous peoples, proving that any person's identity is not only built on the type of person they are now, but also on how people are currently interacting with each other. An excerpt from a letter from a former SIT student provides an interpretation of this:

I was an SIT student in Samoa in the fall semester of 1999, and the experience of living in Samoa absolutely changed my life. I know that the majority of SIT students would probably say the same thing, no matter what country they lived in for their semester abroad. But what I want to tell you is how Samoa, in particular, made such an important impact on me and my life. Samoa is where I learned my true definition of culture, which stays with me every day.

Prior to my semester in Samoa, I had travelled to other developing nations: Kenya (with SIT in 1996), Jamaica, Belize, and San Salvador Bahamas. However, Samoa is the only place I have been so far in my travels where I felt that I really got to experience the indigenous culture the way the indigenous people do. And experiencing life like a Samoan means, in part, having the opportunity to experience life the way Samoans have been living for hundreds of years. I attribute much of this to the relative lack of a colonizing influence in Samoa. Although officially colonized by Germany and New Zealand in its history, Samoa just does not seem like a colonized country - at least not like the other countries to which I have travelled. And Samoans just do not seem like a colonized people. Everywhere you go in Samoa you see Samoans doing what Samoans have been doing for centuries - making mats, drinking kava, harvesting coconuts, cooking the umu (earthen oven), and speaking the Samoan language of their ancestors. In contrast, everywhere I went in Kenya, I saw Kenyans attempting to survive and thrive within the remnants of the economy and social structure left behind by their colonizers.

I am not saying that one of these experiences is more valuable than the other, but I am saying that it is imperative that students of the world have the opportunity to see both possibilities. Samoa is truly a unique place. And SIT is one of the few organizations that provides students the opportunity to experience it. In the U.S., students do not learn about the Pacific. They do not study Oceania, nor read Polynesian literature. What I have learned about the Pacific I only learned by going there - with SIT. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

Culturally responsive teaching methods, while primarily designed for students of colour and/or multiracial students, clearly benefit students of all racial, sociological and ethnic backgrounds and multicultural, multiracial student bodies. SIT's Samoa programme not only incorporates the multicultural identity of its students, it also encourages interactions with students from multiple cultures in the Pacific region. Communal learning is also key part in instilling the necessity of shared responsibility. Students are encouraged to create

their own study groups and organise cultural excursions and immersions on the weekends. Students also support their learning environment through peer reviewing and out-of-class discussions and debates.

Along with improving academic achievement, (these) approaches to teaching are committed to helping students of colour maintain identity and connections with their ethnic groups and communities; develop a sense of community... and shared responsibility; and acquire an ethic of success. Expectations and skills are not taught as separate entities but are woven together into an integrated whole that permeates all curriculum content and the entire *modus operandi* of the classroom. Students are held accountable for one another's learning as well as their own. They are expected to internalize the value that learning is a communal, reciprocal, interdependent affair and manifest it habitually in their expressive behaviours. (Gay, 2000, p. 33).

SIT students are encouraged to foster and contribute to a strong peer group that seeks to discuss and strengthen the ties of any students of colour that may feel marginalised. SIT students also often come to recognise the implicit value of having a perspective that in America is usually marginalised, thus within the SIT programme, this marginalised perspective becomes invaluable to their acculturation throughout the semester. Via this shift in perception priorities, students ultimately realise the power of belonging to or being cast as part of what they may have previously deemed a "minority community."

The students' experience in the Pacific Communities and Social Change program teaches them to value Indigenous heritage and traditions and also provides the skills to de-construct and re-construct their western identity on the foundation of the curricular intersection and cultural union. Gay (2000), quoting, Crichlow et al., J. King & Wilson, 1900; Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990 (1990) remarks:

[...] Culturally responsive pedagogy lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools. It helps students realize that no single version of “truth” is total and permanent. Nor should it be allowed to exist uncontested. Students are taught how to apply new knowledge generated by various ethnic scholars to their analysis of social histories, issues, problems and experiences. These learning engagements encourage and enable students to find their own voices, to contextualize issues in multiple cultural perspectives, to engage in more ways of knowing and thinking and to become more active participants in shaping their own learning. (p. 38)

An experiential curriculum utilises and expounds upon the synergy of abstract conceptions and verification through concrete, tangible and interactive systems of erudition. Some of the first interpretations a typical student makes about knowledge and ways of gaining it within the parameters of a classroom have to do with study materials such as textbooks, the physicality of the classroom and the ethos of learning directed by education authorities. John G. Sommer, Former Dean, College Semester Abroad, SIT writes,

The textbook symbolizes the assumption that learning is primarily concerned with abstract ideas and concepts. Learning is the process of acquiring and remembering ideas and concepts. The more concepts remembered, the more you have learned. The relevance and application of those concepts to your own job will come later. Concepts come before experience. (Sommer, (1997) p. 34).

Students are holistic and responsive beings. A new host culture has the ability to establish a viewpoint where students can literally and figuratively recognise and analyse their home culture out of context. “Culturally responsive teaching is empowering and enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. Such empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage and the will to act” (Gay, 2000, p. 34). Within a Western education system, due to the pressures of society,

the task and responsibility of how to attain knowledge rests firmly on the shoulders of the instructor and students often blame the instructor if they get a low grade. Students rarely consider their educational duty of learning and listening to their instructor or peers. Instead, the students' awareness is solely limited to the atmosphere of the classroom and/or school building. "The classroom symbolises the assumption that learning is a special activity cut off from the real world and unrelated to one's life. Learning and doing are separate and antithetical activities". (Sommer, 1997, p. 34). Students and teachers should not ignore their natural impulse to interact and share experiences. This type of interaction happens all the time in society, and within certain indigenous cultural structures is an often orchestrated ritual termed "oral tradition," invoked by a particular person, time or setting.

Cooperation, community and connectedness are also central features of culturally responsive teaching. Students are expected to work together and are held accountable for another's success. Mutual aid, interdependence, and reciprocity as criteria for guiding behaviour replace the individualism and competitiveness that are so much a part of conventional classrooms. (Gay, 2000, p. 38).

6.6 Chapter 6-7 Transition Notes

Chapter 6 provided a comprehensive and in-depth look at typical stereotypes and classifications that may impede multicultural, multi-perspective learning environments if not acknowledged and explored within experiential academic programs. In order to more fully understand the ideology behind multi-perspective, culturally responsive students interacting with alternative ways of knowing and culturally responsive pedagogy, a selection of short stories are presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

“To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else’s image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself.” — Bell Hooks

Chapter 7 begins with, “Department of Stories, Side-tracks and Sandals,” a short story offers an insider’s look into the world of experiential education programs. Section 7.1.1, comments on the development of “Department of Stories, Side-tracks, and Sandals.” Both sections aim to prepare the reader, through the creative interpretation of empirical data, for the deeper analysis of the SIT experiential education program in sections, 7.2 offers a closer look at SIT Samoa, 7.2.1 discusses the development of the short story presented in the previous section,” and 7.2.2 looks at the activities of the semester in a nutshell. “Section 7.3, provides an overview of the SIT seminars, “Traditional Societies in Transition and Globalisation and Contemporary Issues in the Pacific which are discussed at length in sections, 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 respectively. “Section 7.4, discusses certain experiential education activities used throughout the SIT seminars during the semester. Section 7.5 gives a brief overview of SIT and USP student interchanges. Section 7.6, “Potential benefits from SIT student interaction” gives a brief overview of possible positive outcomes that arise from two culturally different student bodies. Finally, section 7.7 provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 7 and introduces Chapter 8.

7.1 Department of Stories, Side-tracks and Sandals

Experiential Education (EE) 101

Course Syllabus and Outline

Course Title: Collecting stories of Burdens, Ruses, Ownership, Water, and the
Necessity of cultural connection aka BROWN

Prerequisites: Samoa Study Abroad Semester, Eco-Tourism 101, Dressing
Appropriately 201, How to Maximize your Student Loan 301, How to Own your
(American) Brownness in a Brown Country 401, Begging for a Scholarship MA
level Seminar.

Instructors: The land, waters and people of Oceania aka The South Pacific

Office: Independent Samoa

Office Hours: THR 2:30-5:30 W 2:30-5:00... haha, just kidding, availability is either
constantly available, especially when you want to be left alone; only available
when there is food; never on Sunday because I'm sleeping, at church, or at
to'onai, but you shouldn't be doing work on a Sunday anyway... or when you
see me, just smile, look friendly, mix the desperation in your eyes with a little bit
of hope and I'll see what I can do...

Telephone: Only useful when I have enough money for credit

E-Mail: Thisisyourlifefenow@experientialeducation.com

Course Materials: A pocket folder, a Samoan-English dictionary, flash drive, cheap
pens, notebooks, Pepto Bismol, extra underwear... and chocolate from New
Zealand (works every time as a bribe for stories).

Welcome to Collecting stories of Burdens, Ruses, Ownership, Water, and the Necessity of cultural connection aka BROWN! This course involves the reading, listening to and writing of life learning and transformation stories with concentration on the utilisation of elements of indigenous/traditional theme, cyclical structure, and oral tradition/oration styles. Interpretive skills through the development of various critical reading and discussion activities will be honed. Intuition will be honed as well, through the odd emotional breakdown and spiritual experience.

GENERAL EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION GOALS:

1. Students will learn how to communicate in eyebrow language.
2. Students will apply appropriate life experiences and “aha moments” during their village life surveys in order to synthesise gathered information.
3. Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analysing information gathered through different media and from a variety of sources.
4. Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyse human behaviour and social and political institutions.
5. Students will analyse works of the literary, visual or performing arts.
6. Students will analyse historical events and movements in Western and Indigenous societies and assess their subsequent significance.
7. Students will analyse the implications of commonalities and differences among culturally diverse peoples.
8. Students will recognise, analyse, and assess ethical issues and situations.

LEARNING HOPES:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will:

1. Acknowledge that cultural differences bring people together for interesting conversation, awkward moments and indigestion.
2. Shift his/her perspective and understanding of others.
3. Be drawn to different styles of thought and action.
4. Be adept at intercultural communication.
5. Be able to accept that culture shock can be a valuable and unique experience.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

To'ona'i, pig-killing, opening coconuts, discussions, village-stays, drinking, insomnia, sharing food, going hungry, learning, teaching Americans, teaching oneself how to learn, making mistakes in Samoan and ordering a penis instead of raw fish, getting lost, braiding hair, observations, taking a break, conferences, presentations, library activities, weaving mats, picking flowers at dawn, stillness, sleeping on the beach, getting dehydrated and laughing with the nurse, earthquakes, tsunamis, rain, droughts, loneliness, falling in lust, falling in love, aitu, and the Land.

7.1.1 Story Analysis

In the article, “An Anthropologist as Travel Writer,” Robert Tonkinson (2000) from the University of Western Australia states:

The combination “anthropologist-South Pacific” is a sure-fire trigger that evokes for many a romantic vision of a long and languorous idyll beneath waving palms on remote golden sands, the epitome of getting away from it all. There is truth in this vision, but it ignores certain realities. No one who abandons the comforting familiarity of his or her own culture for a year or two’s immersion in a very different one does so without some traumas of adjustment. So when the inevitable question comes-“What is it like working there?”-My usual response mirrors the ups and downs that virtually all anthropologists experience in the field: “Mostly I really love it, but never every day, and there are times when I wonder what the hell I’m doing there.” (p. 159).

“Department of Stories” discusses the stages of adaptation, integration and acceptance into the Samoan culture MPCR students might experience. MPCR students must learn to approach their host-culture with an extremely open and adventurous spirit in order to fully immerse themselves in their hands-on learning. “Department of Stories” is also formatted to look like a typical course syllabus, however, it has been written in a humorous and ironic tone that is meant to convey the atypical situations students come into contact with during their semester abroad. The juxtaposition of the stylised, academic arrangement, and the playful writing in the same syllabus, hopefully creates a more accurate and multi-layered scene accessible for closer examination.

7.2 SIT in Samoa, A Closer Look

The SIT programme in Samoa fully submerges both the educator and the student within the host culture. It simultaneously creates a single lens from the mesh of Indigenous and Western identities and perspectives. The SIT student, through an expansive experiential educational curriculum gains a deep understanding of both traditional and present-day life in Samoa. The programme also helps the student achieve a general familiarity with other contemporary ways of Pacific Island life as well as their histories, shared and independently evolved.

The programme base is the University of the South Pacific Alafua Campus in Samoa. The students live in hostels with other Pacific Island students but they also spend time at the University of Hawai'i, the East-West Centre, the National University of Samoa and the Alafua and Laucala campuses of the University of the South Pacific in Samoa and Fiji respectively. Local academics or experts present lectures on Samoan tradition, religion, education, agriculture, nutrition and health which help students better understand Samoa, and by extension other Pacific Island cultures. The programme culminates in a student-driven Independent Study Project (ISP) that examines a topic of the student's choice.

The following are some examples of student ISP topics. Along with the SIT Samoa's Academic Director, I helped to facilitate the research aims of these student projects from the Spring 2011 semester to the Spring 2012 semester:

- How Current Teachers Perceive Professional Relationships with Principals
- The Success and the Sustainability of the Australian Youth (AYAD) Program Placements in Samoa
- Health Promotion, Prevention and Awareness: How the Diabetes Epidemic is being addressed
- A Critique of Samoan School Nutrition Standards
- Distance and Flexible Learning at USP Alafua
- Climate Change in Samoa: Impacts and Adaptation
- Responsible Tourism in Samoa
- Organic Agriculture in Samoa
- Preparing for the Worst: Disaster Preparedness Education in Samoa
- What does it mean to be a P.I.? An Exploration of the Values Shared by Pacific Island Cultures
- A Look at Fish Farming in Samoa
- Volunteerism in Samoa
- Expression through Writing: A Look at Children's Writing in Samoa
- Youth Voters
- Komititumama
- Seawalls in Samoa
- Experiencing Samoa Through Stories: Myths and Legends of a People and Place
- Mobile Use Amongst Samoan Youth: For Better or for Worse?
- Campus Life at the University of the South Pacific, Alafua Campus
- Media in Samoa: Journalists' Realities, Regional Initiatives and Visions for the Future
- A Global Faalavelave: Effects of the 2011 Northeast Japan Earthquake on Samoa
- I've Got So Much Honey the Bees Envy Me: Beekeeping in Samoa
- Bridging the Gap: A look into Samoan Youth, their problems and organisations currently combating youth issues

The forces of Westernisation and globalisation have transformed social, economic and political aspects of the Pacific Island cultures. The SIT programme introduces students to environmental and social change in the Pacific through lectures and excursions that revolve around tourism, disaster tourism and the emerging issue of climate change refuges. The programme challenges and nurtures its students evolving academic and non-academic insights surrounding the history and current interactions between Western and Indigenous cultures and how and changes between and within the two occur. The Pacific Communities and Social Change experiential education curriculum deals with important issues surrounding the convergence of Western and Indigenous identities, including attitudes of independence and self-reliance encouraged through the efforts of NGOs, education initiatives, and aid and development programs. The programme also delves into discussions about communalism versus individualism in Samoa and the subsequent cultural transformation. Students experience a cultural value system that does not place the community over the individual. Finally, students investigate the influence of missionaries' religious beliefs and practices on Samoan traditions and Indigenous beliefs.

Students also visit American Samoa where they explore academia geared towards increasing Samoan and Pacific Islander cultural awareness. This connection provides deeper insight into and contact with a plethora of opinions that help students further interpret the concepts of "Western" and "Indigenous." Students might at first feel frustrated to realise that there isn't just one fixed definition for each type of culture. Understanding that "Western" and "Indigenous," or rather American and Samoan have

fluid and interchangeable meanings can be an incredibly powerful learning tool within a curriculum.

As the globalisation, Westernisation and re-Indigenisation of the world envelops regressing and progressing societies, in a continuous ebb and flow of transformative information, education paradigms need to shift more than ever. Experiential education practices contribute to the convergence and relationship-building interactions between Western and Indigenous students. Many SIT students seek information and opinions from students from Samoa, Fiji, Niue, Vanuatu and Tonga in the completion of their Independent Study projects. A few SIT students have created and co-hosted shared-events with the different Pacific Islanders such as kava nights, potluck dinners, cultural nights and dance showcases. Three former students have even completed short films/film research projects on different aspects of blended cultures in Samoa and on the USP Alafua campus.

7.2.1 Story Development

“An SIT Semester” is an account of a typical semester spent with the programme. I wanted to communicate a “feel” of the colour and food and experiences and realisations of moving through different Pacific cultures experienced during this program.

The piece is written in a “real time” voice to give the impression that narrator is writing or calling home and all the new encounters, information, and sensations just come tumbling out... Communicating in this way is usual for students exposed to different places, cultures and peoples for their first time. The sensations can be a bit overwhelming

at first, but later begin to take on a recognisable rhythm and processing.

The conclusion of this piece leaves the reader with a sense of having come full circle and achieving a sense emotional awareness and maturity. The SIT program in Samoa tracks both the academic and emotional journeys of its students, so at the end of the semester students often speak about a new awareness and sense of place.

7.2.2 An SIT Semester in a Banana Peel Nutshell

Honolulu: We are in a hostel. We are in America. Why are we not there yet and what does this place have to do with the Pacific? We go to class and learn how to speak Samoan words to Samoan tunes played on a guitar. We meet students from different islands and begin to realise there is more to the ethnic identity of Hawaii than we imagined. We eat sushi, we eat teriyaki, and we eat fro-yo- we go to class and find out that the annexation of Hawaii was not right. We begin to feel uncomfortable in our own American shoes, is this how other countries see us? We go to Bishop Museum and learn the real hula. The boys cook dinner for the girls and the girls cook dinner for the boys, we learn who is really the best in the kitchen! We go to the beach at night and begin to bond before we board our first flight together.

Apia: We are here! Rain, heat, pink-painted wooden buses, jungle-green foliage and the undulating sounds of Samoan in the market place weave in and out through our jet-lagged consciousness. What are those oblong orange things? Is it a fruit? What does it taste like, can I try *fa'amolemole*? Oh- so good- yummy papaya in one hand, and a fresh

coconut in the other. We are from America in a new place and a new time... zone. From different academic backgrounds coming together to study and experience Oceania from unique viewpoints.

Our first drop-off: We're back at the market, and it's a riot of colour and noise between the buses, people's *lavalava* and the food! Ah! How can I get on this bus and just start talking to people I don't know, we ask ourselves. Don't let your nerves get the best of you! Samoans can be just as nervous and curious about you as you are of them. The scent of possibility is in the air and adventure is close- get ready to hop on the buses as they go by. Someone couldn't decide to take the one called, "Babe Jungle" or "Pretty Little *Teine*?" or get on the purple and white one with the pink boa and picture of Jesus hanging in the rear-view mirror? I didn't know if I was headed inland or up the coast, but I found out when I got there- and when in doubt, I just said I'm a lost American trying to find my way through Samoa, and someone fed me fresh sugar cane from their garden before they put me in the bus home. Don't forget to go back and visit!

USP Alafua Campus in the morning: Rain, sunshine, rain, clouds, mist, and sunshine! We pick our way through campus, stopping to have breakfast in the dining room, tentatively smiling at the dining hall staff as they grin at us and turn the music up. Eggs, porridge, tea, coffee, peanut-butter flavoured cereal become delicacies at 7:30am; one of us tries an L&P soft drink from New Zealand. Fiji, Niue, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa; we sit among students from these places and reach out at the same time for the sugar bowl and laugh at each other's shy smiles. Which class are you going to today, the

one by the farm or the one by the library, or the one by the computer lab- oh, the computer lab- which one, oh the one across from the classroom that the skinny cat and her three hungry kittens live under- well if you're going to that one, take some buttered toast for her please.

Noon: Fried chicken, chop suey with chicken, curry chicken, roti, *keke pua'a* and stir-fry vegetables are the only choices for lunch. We've been in class all morning; news updates from around Oceania are shared and performed creatively through skits and poetry. Language learning begins with a spirit of discovery and positive anticipation, new sounds and words are tasted deliriously and deliciously; comprehension is possible with practice we discover!

After lunch: Taro chips and headed back to our rooms for a break before our afternoon speakers. Religion, culture, environment, education, delicious chickpea and pumpkin soup at the nutrition centre. Such a variety of knowledge presented and digested through interesting mediums of sensory and vocal communication. *Manaia!*

Later: It's so hot! Let's go to town and get some New Zealand ice cream, Hokey Pokey flavour anyone? Fish and chips too, why not? Many Samoans and tourists crowd the sea wall today, is that a cruise ship in the harbour? Who's here in our place we ask as our mentality shifts from visitor to resident.

Lotofaga: Wooden bus road trip at 8:30am, past the natural pool at Piula, and then we don't know where! Finally, after having gone from one windy road, up a hill to another windy road, we are here just in time for the Kava ceremony with a few *matai* and the women's church group. *Palusami*- coconut cream cooked in young taro leaves, baked fish, taro and breadfruit for lunch, and then on to our new houses and families where we will stay for two weekends. Our Samoan mothers have all made us fresh and bright leis.

The next day: Crackers and butter, tea, *koko Samoa* for breakfast, and then fresh guava and star apple at Jackie's house before we begin our language class. We break for a morning tea of familiar peanut butter and jelly before discussing our survey and research tasks-and find out that we're going to visit a *taro* and coconut plantation in the morning to do some gardening! Will there be fresh coconuts? Yes?

Church on Sunday with our families: girls wear the *puletasi*, and boys wear nice shirts and *lavalava*. Pork, fish, *palusami*, breadfruit and lemon leaf tea for four... a short nap when we are *ma'ona*. Swimming on Sunday? Well, maybe for us. - Pristine beauty and a cool dip in the sea on a hot afternoon. Reggae music and fun with the local kids. A couple of days later: Are we ready for the *fiafia*? Thank goodness for the hours of practice. Our families dress us up in brightly coloured clothing, weave flowers in our hair, adorn us with coconut shell jewellery and we're on! Music, singing, laughing at the items we perform, the time has passed so quickly!

Return to USP: We've had a chance to rest and recuperate, do our laundry and hang out with the friends we were starting to make on the USP campus. The rainbows are still hanging in the sky, and it's beginning to feel like home. The gym is still unbearably hot, and the rugby players say hi to us as they jog by.

Savaii: We catch the last ferry from Upolu ready for a fabulous break at the beach *fale* resort, Tanu Beach baby! Our swimsuits are packed alongside sneakers for hiking. Our plans include a visit to the lava fields; blowholes to see how high coconut shells can go when thrown in, the legendary village Tufutafoe and then Falealupo, beaches, market places for *panikeke*, bananas and wow- look at all those carrots! We spend a day learning how to make tapa the traditional way and discuss eco-tourism.

Safua Hotel: Warren is with us! He drives us all over the island with humour and information and passes out mocha and orange-flavoured biscuits. And then and then and then, we're at The Waterfall! A cascade of brilliant water falls from the small hill, the sun glints off cold and clear water- and- ah! We're all splashed and sputtering at each other because we all jump in at the same time.

Later: The food and company at Safua is excellent. Seaweed salads, curried vegetables, coconut cream and fish, eggplant curries, more papaya and coconut slices than someone can eat in a week, beef, baked tuna, the list goes on, and we just eat and laugh and listen to the band that plays, and then after we digest, we dance and sing with them and teach

them how to play cat's cradle. We can't believe we have to go back to Apia tomorrow, oh, we don't, feel like staying the weekend?

American Samoa: Potato chips, hot dogs, KFC and soda at the meet and greet at American Samoa Community College. We notice how much larger everyone is here, and we remember America and vow to use this experience as a reminder of our responsibility to be aware of the negative affects cultures can have on one another.

Later: Everyone goes home with a student and enjoys a unique mixture of American and Samoan cultures. We go to the gym, church and fast food joints and talk all night with our hosts before waking up to pancakes.

USP Alafua: We're back and it's granola bars, quesadillas (we make ourselves with groceries we brought back from Am Sam) and American cereals while we gear up for our visit to Fiji. We complete our final language tests and begin readings on Pacific culture that focus on aspects of Fijian history and culture. Are we ready for city life in Suva?

Fiji: Nadi, Sigatoka and Suva. We land in Nadi and rest at Sandalwood hotel before meeting our Indo-Fijian guide Prem. He drives us on highways named after kings and queens while pointing out pickled mango being sold by the road. We stop at Indian markets and buy pink, green and white sweets and admire the gorgeous florescent colours of saris. The smells and spices and sights fold over and layer upon each other like multi-sensory mosaics.

Suva: In Suva we go to the food market and buy fresh roti and dahl. We wander around USP Fiji and our hips sway and our smiles widen as we dance in the Oceania Centre. We sit in on lectures and learn about race riots and coups and water shortages and then we visit a squatter settlement, and suddenly, we are able to put life and culture Samoa in perspective. We understand now the value and importance of protecting the environment enough so Pacific people may go on living their subsistence lifestyles.

USP Alafua: Familiarity, home, a new centre in our lives. We find ourselves comfortable with Samoan fluidity. As we explore the islands of Upolu and Savaii on our own, we give directions to tourists. As we wander through the markets, we haggle deals and discover the treasure of friendship. As we part from each other, further on our paths of research, our experiences merge and mesh with Samoans, with ourselves, with the new traditions of awareness we now carry.

7.3 SIT Seminars, A Closer Look

An in-depth look at the two seminars used in the SIT's: Pacific Communities and Social Change programme illustrates that the learning outcomes of SIT students are directly related to the development of their identity as MPCR students. Through these seminars, students witness the interplay of Indigenous Pacific societies and Westernisation as well as the resulting transformation of Indigenous Pacific societies. Economics, cultural anthropology and the arts and humanities are used as academic lenses for the students to further track and understand several Pacific Island cultural histories, Western and

Samoa socio-political and epistemological convergences, and Samoan cultural transformations.

The ways in which SIT seminars are conducted illustrate the usage of both convergence Indigenous pedagogy and experiential education. SIT educators clearly utilise skills from both disciplines to help students function competently in the SIT programme. SIT students also eventually learn that honing their skills using the unique combination of disciplines also prepares them to foster and further shared interactions within the duration of the programme while preparing them for a life after and beyond the SIT programme in Samoa.

Realistically, some SIT students have given some critique of the programme. The following remarks that I wish to share are some common complaints that have been voiced during the challenging process of learning in an experiential education programme.

I did have reservations about going to Samoa because I had heard that the culture was a difficult one to deal with and that certain things like what I could wear would be restricted. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

I didn't enjoy the research portion of the program. I felt that there was not a lot of direction and I felt pressured to produce a paper with not a lot of guidance. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

I didn't like how much time was taken up by classes or program-related travel. I wanted to be on my own more and have my own experience not dictated by an academic agenda. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

The group you have really adds to the overall experience. If you get stuck with a bad group or a group that doesn't want to do anything or go anywhere then your experience in Samoa becomes very limited because it is hard to break out of the group dynamic. (Personal Communication, December 2012).

These student assessments of the feelings are extremely valid, and help to paint a clearer and more representative view of student feelings during their learning process, however, many SIT students ultimately discover how to recognise and let go of pre-judgments and cultural presumptions. They realise that before an experience in a new environment, they should decide neither to oppose nor submit to this new environment before first experiencing it. The SIT programme presents the SIT students with tools to adapt and integrate skills while helping the students to further develop their identities as MPCR students with a continued shared global consciousness. A letter from an SIT Samoa 1998 Alumnus further explores this,

Choosing the SIT Samoa program was one of the most pivotal decisions I made in my life. I have a bachelor's degree from Harvard and an MBA from UCLA - but the most valuable lessons I have kept with me in my career and personal life derive from those four incredible months I spent in Samoa. I still keep my trip journal on my desk and refer to it often, to remind myself that my worldview is just one of many. I think about how some one living 5,000 miles away might approach the challenges I face on a daily basis, and imagine what valuable, unexpected insights their perspective could offer. As I rush home from a crazy day at work, I think about boys spearing fish on a beach and women weaving mats from dried leaves. I microwave dinner recalling so strongly the scent of a pig smoking on an umu. I put my daughter to bed singing Samoan songs my host families sung to me. Samoa is and will always be with me every day of my life. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

The following chart highlights some key SIT student-learning experiences/outcomes achieved throughout the duration of the two seminars. This chart seeks to track/show the relationships between the SIT students' learning context, the students' responses to their learning context and finally the techniques used to discuss the students' reactions to their experiences within the Samoan environment and the context of a moving, experiential education classroom.

Learning Context	Student Responses	Techniques Used
Student is immersed directly within an Indigenous cultural structure	Student may interpret culture through lens of this one experience	Discuss and relate student's current experiences to past experiences in home culture/ personal goals student might share w/ Indigenous people
Student is placed in situations that necessitate a relationship to place/people	Student may have a negative emotional experience with place/people	Students are encouraged to seek out alternative and non-facilitated experiences
Student are placed in situations that require a (subjective) measure of emotional independence	Student realizes many experiences are subjective	Students chart their experiences in journal or discussion format to see transformation
Student reevaluates how they see themselves	Student may feel uncomfortable	A set of guidelines or markers assist/student to understand personal growth
Student interactions with impacts their surroundings because of institutionally facilitated research	Student sees experience as facilitated rather than spontaneous	Students are allowed free unmanaged time within the culture
Semester-long experience	Student may make premature conclusions on a time-sensitive experience	A forum to process experiences and space for group/individual discussion on re-entry is facilitated

Overview SIT Samoa Student Learning Experience within the two Seminars

7.3.1 Traditional Societies in Transition Seminar⁴¹

Students experience traditional life first-hand in a ten day village stay in a rural village in southeast Upolu. Lectures prior to the village stay discuss traditional social structures and key elements of the *fa'asamoa*, which Emma Kruse Va'ai (2011) aptly describes:

Fa'asamoa is a framework for action and perception is therefore permeative. The resilience of the Samoan social structure provides the basis for a confident and assertive appropriation of social practices of various kinds. It can appropriate seemingly strong and all-embracing influences such as Christianity and systems of law and order with strong European origins to reinforce rather than overwhelm Samoan reality. The Samoan structures are designed to maintain harmonious relations through appropriate social distances, acknowledgement and forms of organisation. Different beliefs and practices have been, and will continue to be appropriated into the system but there exists an underlying, consistent consciousness that the emerging patterns of action and change are identifiable as Samoan. (p. 41).

The impact of Christianity on Samoan culture and the role of education are also discussed prior to the village stay. During the home stay, students participate in church services and church related activities. They also visit a primary school and teach short lessons.

The late professor, Eveli Hauofa's article "The Future of our Past" stimulates discussion of traditional Pacific values. In the village setting students observe the sharing of goods and services, intimacy in interpersonal relationships and the ways, which the elderly, and those with special needs, are cared for by their families. Students participate in traditional welcome and farewell ceremonies, assist with traditional food preparation and observe weaving and traditional agricultural practices. They also learn some Samoan

⁴¹ This seminar is constantly being developed and is subject to change--I should know as I helped to update the course curriculum and description!

songs and dances so are active participants in a farewell *fiafia* that concludes the village stay.

Further lectures on the *matai* system and democracy, religious issues, health, agriculture, and environment help the students to consolidate their acquisition of knowledge through experience. SIT students then explore key values seen in the village stay in a three to five page paper that illustrates the strengths of traditional society and considers the opportunities and constraints as villagers adapt to life in a more globalised world.

7.3.2 Globalisation and Contemporary Issues in the Pacific Seminar⁴²

During this seminar, visits to American Samoa and Fiji offer opportunities to compare and contrast how Pacific communities deal with globalisation and social change. Students explore the impacts of globalisation in a variety of ways, including student led discussions on contemporary Pacific Island challenges, the positive and negative impacts of globalisation and issues Pacific Island cultures face. Environmental issues in the Pacific are discussed in readings, lectures and documentaries. Documentaries produced by ethnographic videographers in Samoa, American Samoa and Fiji are viewed and discussed, in some cases with the producers of the films. Upon return from American Samoa, students consider aid and strategies for development in Samoa and the accompanying agendas. Student's readings focus on the role and influence of China, and Samoa's dependence on foreign aid. Students visit aid organisations, NGOs, the United

⁴² This seminar is constantly being developed and is subject to change--I should know as I helped to update the course curriculum and description!

Nations Development Program and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They also present brief oral presentations on topics of interest related to Fiji.

The impacts of tourism are discussed and observed in both Savaii and Fiji. A seven-day excursion to the big island of Savaii provides opportunities to participate in traditional *tapa* making, discuss the role of Indigenous art in tourist markets, visit tourist markets and tourist sites including the Saleaula lava fields, the Tafua Crater, and the Taga Blowholes.

Students also study the current issues and development in Samoa, American Samoa, and Fiji. They attend lectures on political challenges, ethnic issues, environmental development, and social change in Samoa and Fiji and also see and discuss films on the Trans nationalisation of the Matai System, Squatters in Fiji, and issues leading to the 2000 coup in Fiji. In American Samoa, the students attend classes at American Samoa Community College with American Samoan Students, and participate in shared activities with the Samoan Studies Institute

In Fiji, the students have a two-day home stay with an Indigenous Fijian family in the eco-tourist village of Abaca and an Indo-Fijian family in Indian settlement of Kulukulu near Sigatoka. These rural home stays contrast with a two day visit to Suva, the capital of Fiji and the most cosmopolitan city in the island Pacific. While in Suva, the students visit

with the People's Community Network, an NGO working with squatters throughout Fiji and attend lectures at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies.

Wrapping up their academic programming, students explore issues and the future of Samoa and the island states they've been studying all semester. The students discuss issues of sustainability and change with a strong focus on current events. At this point in the programme, the instructor-guided activities and lectures cease, and the student embarks on the last part of the program, a four week long, self-directed independent research project that culminates as both an oral and written research report at the end of the semester. Before returning to America, the students return to their first village home-stay families, allowing them to come full circle and give back to those that set them on their Western and Indigenous interactive journey.

7.4 Stimulating Student Learning and Growth

Several types of activities/ assignments help stimulate or consolidate student learning. Students experience their first drop off on day one in Samoa. The drop-offs are a way to integrate the students with daily Samoan life in and around the urban centre and peripheral villages in Samoa. Students are "dropped off" by their Academic Director at various locations close to the Apia, and on another day board a bus to a more rural village. The two drop-offs provide opportunities to compare and contrast urban and rural settings. The drop-offs enable the students to achieve a higher level of comfort with their situation in Samoa. Students are far from their home country in what they might perceive

to be an “alien” culture and might have forgotten that just as these Samoans are foreign to them, the students might be foreign to Samoans. The drop-offs help the students understand this type of double-consciousness, the discussion of which begins with first understanding how they learn. Being aware of what they respond to also enables them to become more aware of what others respond to and allows them to adjust their communication styles in order to incorporate a multi-level conversation. Being able to document some of these learning experiences in journal form is another key learning activity. Students keep a cultural observation journal in which they record their interpretations from excursions, and home stays in Hawaii, Samoa, American Samoa and Fiji. This journal is written in a description-interpretation-evaluation (DIE) format and helps the students to process their learning experiences and relate them to previous experiences they may have in their home culture before coming to Samoa.

In preparation for their research projects, students participate in a variety of information gathering activities. They plan and manage research-related interviews and organise and conduct one or more surveys. Students conduct their initial first hand research in the field during their rural village stay. They are encouraged to use a variety of methodologies including bilingual surveys, interviews and participant observation to learn more about how a village functions. Students incorporate their collected data in research reports, cultural observation journals, work journal, mini-ISP and Independent Study Projects (ISP). The SIT programme not only encourages students to immerse themselves in cultural activities but also provides them with the opportunity for some basic fieldwork.

The ISP is a hallmark of all SIT programming that builds on the knowledge and skills learned in the seminars.

In addition to their cultural observations journal, students also keep a work journal during the ISP portion of the programme. The work journal includes the ISP proposal, contact information for informants and the student's ISP advisor, a working bibliography of sources used during ISP, ISP drafts. It also includes an events section that documents at least 120 hours of work, an interview section with transcriptions for key interviews, a secondary source section with notes taken from those sources or copies of the articles themselves. A themes section encourages students to draw out and discuss key themes identified in interviews and secondary sources. These themes are then developed in to the outline for the final paper. Surveys and an analysis of data are also part of the work journal.

As mentioned above, culmination of the project is the ISP period. SIT students do independent research on the topic of their choice. Throughout the research portion of ISP, students use their knowledge of the Samoan language, surveying and interviewing skills. A successful ISP combines students' semester-long experiential learning with solid academic reporting, which showcases their learning during the semester. An alumnus of the Fall 2005 Samoa: Pacific Islands Studies programme writes:

I think the best way to express the impact of my SIT Samoa experience on my life and academic development is to show you two papers I have written based on my time there. One is my ISP on the impact of agricultural changes on the traditional culture, fa'a Samoa. This project was a key factor in my intellectual

and personal development. Another is a paper I wrote for my Master's degree based on research done while in the SIT Samoa program. This is a comparison of Samoan and American tattoo culture. Based on my extensive literature review of the subject of tattoos around the world, my tatau experience in Samoa, which Jackie facilitated, gave greater experientially based cross-cultural insight into the culturally transcendent meaning of body art than any preceding author has provided. Nobody writing about American tattoo culture seems to have any understanding of the art's significance in Polynesia, where it originated. In getting a traditional tattoo and speaking with or interviewing many Samoans about the meaning of their tattoos, my experience in this SIT program provided me a more informed opinion on the meaning of tattoos to the originators of the art form than any of the western body art experts I researched. I do not think I am unique as an SIT Samoa student in getting this depth of anthropological understanding out of this program. SIT Samoa can give students unique and also generalizable insights into the human condition. I cannot think of a better representation of Dewey's core principles of interaction and continuity, than the engagement and lifelong intellectual enrichment this experience has provided me. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

ISP projects clearly impact both the SIT students' personal and inter-cultural experiences and how they synthesise their research. Many students use their ISPs as the basis for senior theses or independent study courses at their respective universities. Some career choices are a direct result of ISPs done in Samoa, in fact a student from 2012 is going to Thailand to continue his work with fish farming and another two students have gone to South Africa and Ghana to present and conduct further research on eco-tourism and its impacts on developing economies. ISP projects also help students develop closer cross-cultural relationships with USP students, as many USP students are willing and able to help with research and peer-edits. These relationships often progress from a pleasant camaraderie to a genuine closeness in a variety of ways.

7.5 Summary of SIT and USP Student Convergences

A Pacific Island student wrote to me saying,

Most of them [SIT students] that we met are very friendly and socialise. As a first year student, we need to cope with the environment and they really help just in the way of being a friend, us trying to adapt to a new culture. Hence I learn a lot from their way of study (Personal Communication, October 2012)

American and Samoan identities converge in two major instances in the SIT program. The first of these in language learning and usage of each other's languages. Students get to practice/ their Samoan language skills in several different activities, i.e. drop-offs, market shopping, taking taxis, surveys, and tests. Many students learn at least a few Fijian phrases from their Fijian housemates in preparation for their trip to Fiji later in the program. In addition to this, many people the students come into contact with, including their host families are eager to practice their English skills

The series of homestays in three countries are an in-depth extension of experiential education. Living with a family and participating in their routines breaks down or stretches barriers of personal space and place. Students are encouraged to interact with a variety of "others" from the early days of the programme and often develop into significant friendships, sometimes romantic in nature. Some students also form friendships with other *palagi* volunteers or expatriates working in Samoa. Working

relations may develop between students and advisors during their ISP period.⁴³ More significant, perhaps is the evolution of a deeper intuitive relationship with self. Such interactions lead to other benefits.

7.6 Potential Benefits from SIT Student Interaction

I must admit, like the Academic Director of SIT Samoa, I am starting to become used to receiving letters from former SIT students. Once in awhile, I do receive some critical feedback from Pacific Island students. I found that approaching their remarks as constructive criticism provided another type of insight as to how to interpret the relationship centred aspects of SIT programming. The following comments shed light on some negative experiences:

I think that there's no positive impact on my academic identity due to the different educational curriculum taken by individual students. But the reason been is that I tend not to plead for their assistance. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

SIT students sometimes don't make friends with us. I don't know why, maybe they are afraid of us. I don't think they are racist though. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

The only thing I find negative about the SITs is that a few of them do not want to mix with the USP students. And these few students really show that they do not like being mixed with other nationalities. Last semester, the 3 girls in the group of 5 did mention that they did not like their friends hanging out with Samoan students. It is a natural thing in many countries but when it is practised in a company this small and when you are my next-door neighbour for more than 3 months I would like that you do not have this issue because I

⁴³ It is important to note that the SIT Samoa staff for the duration of my research were/are perceived by many SIT students to be both bi-cultural and bi-continental. (To add another dimension, I am also multi-racial and my mentor has four bi-racial children). My mentor and I are both from America, live/work in the Pacific and use both Western and Indigenous teaching methodologies.

am homesick most of the time and I need friends. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

While seemingly indicative of one USP student's experience with loneliness, the last letter also speaks to a shared sense of isolation. In order to work through this, both USP and SIT students have to reach out to each other and share their feelings. When they do, they may find a bond that is able to offer a basis for supplementary emotional stability and another source of comfort and "family" which both groups can lean on for strength.

I am also privileged to receive letters from former and current Pacific Islander USP students who communicate some of the positive impacts they themselves experienced in a particular semester. Below is an excerpt from an anonymous letter (both included in the text of another USP student letter and forwarded on to me, trying to shed some light on shared beneficial experiences:

[SIT students are good at]

Providing words of encouragement - most SIT student that I have met, gave me words of encouragement to try my best in order to succeed.

Being a good model - Most of the time I see them busy with their schoolwork and it encourages me to stay focus and concentrate on my schoolwork.

They even carried out some survey on some agriculture related topics. For instance, food security, TB. This provides information for USP students, which help guide them if they needed to do survey on the same topic.

Spirit of socialization - most of the SIT students that I have met are so friendly and are willing to socialize in terms of gathering together, trying to know PIC students.

Sharing - most of the previous SIT students have shared some things they have. (Personal Communication, November 2012).

Interaction with SIT students has a number of potential benefits for those with whom they interface. USP students are able to easily practice and hone their English skills as well as receive any need help in the practice of their English reading and writing skills. Exposing USP students to native English speakers provides an accessible resource to prepare these students for assignments or exams expected or conducted in English due to USP policies.

A Pacific Island USP student further elaborates the benefits of living and sharing a campus with SIT students,

I have learned a lot from SIT students and listed below are some qualities such as:

*To be independent,
Positive perception to people,
Time management, and
Being friendly.*

(Personal Communication, November 2012)

Some SIT students have volunteered at local schools during the ISP period, or out of a deeper interest in finding a way to give back and share learning with their host-culture. Through this, Samoan students are introduced to a culture they may not have had any chance visit and also the possibility of travel beyond their home culture if they are interested.

Many SIT students, without realising, become involved in meaningful and lasting cultural exchanges. The student letter below discusses how a personal encounter with the spirit of reciprocity was ultimately important for a deeper understanding of Pacific Island culture and the value in forging resilient connections.

I am an alumnus of [...] the SIT Samoa Fall '06 semester.... During our orientation in Hawaii we visited Ka'ala Farm, a traditional lo'i (taro field) set up and run by volunteers, many of them native Hawaiian. The young man who gave us a tour refused to accept the payment Jackie offered, but instead suggested, in the spirit of Pacific reciprocity, that if we were to return he would accept a gift from Samoa, and a ceremonial 'ava bowl was agreed upon. Three and a half months later, I agreed to take the large 'ava bowl back to Hawai'i and repay our debt after the program ended. Wearing a Samoan lavalava, I walked to Ka'ala farms to seek him out working in the muddy fields. I introduced myself and he immediately grinned broadly and asked how the semester went, how incredible it must have been, etc etc. until I pulled out the 'ava bowl and presented it. He stared at it in disbelief, then a wide smile crossed his face and he accepted it with a giant bear hug, exclaiming "Now this is what I'm talkin' about, this is 'ohana, man, this is 'ohana! This is what we mean by Pacific brotherhood... this is aloha!" and he sat down and made me talk about life in Samoa, and promise to send him pictures, and I walked away yet again with a true understanding of the concept of strong relationships that cross large distances, the uniqueness and yet connectedness of each island culture, and the frankness and love that is all part of the Pacific mind-set. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

SIT student presence in Samoa initiates a meeting of cultures, ways of knowing and an exchange of ideas. Many USP students, SIT programme lecturers, and guides realise this as well and try to find ways to communicate their desired learning outcomes for these interchanges. During my first semester as the academic coordinator and assistant, an SIT student completed her ISP on Campus Life at USP. Over the course of her data collection and surveying, she discovered many USP students were unhappy because they were unable to share each other's cultures in a facilitated session. The SIT student went on to single-handedly organise and sponsor a "Culture Night", open to all USP students as a forum for showcasing their respective countries. SIT students also participated as a show of solidarity.

USP students are invited to SIT student project presentations and thus may achieve a

unique understanding of their cultural identity viewed through the lens of an American, which allows them to incorporate and/or repudiate aspects of their cultural identity in a safe forum of expression. SIT ISP projects on Samoan/Pacific Island cultures are also catalogued in the USP Alafua library for future student research and use.⁴⁴ The words of a Pacific Island student attending USP Samoa further illuminate the value of this idea exchange,

I have learned a lot from SIT ISP presentations, which I have used in improving my own presentation skills. It was not just presenting the topic, but the journey taken to prepare the presentations. They showed so much commitment, planned their time wisely and asked for assistance whenever they are stuck. I loved the fact that I could see different layout of different presentation, watch their presentation and see where I can improve on mine. My presentations have been very successful after I apply what I learn from others. (Personal Communication, October 2012).

USP and SIT students form lasting friendships that stretch across borders. SIT students often depart, to the sounds of a well known Pacific farewell song about the power of connection, communication and the possibility of meeting again. (Facebook also helps maintain connections). Using the words of some former representatives from the USP Students Association,

The direct interactions between the S.I.T. and the USP students has over the years given students necessary intercultural exchange experiences that the students here have always hoped for. USP Alafua does not receive any other exchange students who can contribute to the teaching and learning experiences of USP students to such a great extent. Student interactions in both an educational and social setting on the USP campus have not only exposed students and the community here to the real American way of life but also to other diverse and international cultures that the program attracts. Also, from our perspective, the S.I.T. Samoa program present Pacific Island culture in a uniquely personal setting as the USP Alafua campus hosts students from all over the Pacific who are able to live and study with S.I.T. students.

⁴⁴ The USP librarian is currently working on cataloguing a digital collection of the ISP projects.

More importantly, both individual students and the community in general have built personal friendships with S.I.T. students. USP students develop long-lasting relationships with S.I.T. students throughout the course of the program that continue long after the program ends. It would be rather unfortunate to deny future generations at USP the opportunity to build these global friendships with future S.I.T. programs, a connection that USP students assuredly do not develop with Peace Corps volunteers, tourists or other international visitors in Samoa. The SIT students are not tourists nor are they Peace Corp volunteers; they become families of the USP students that they interact with on a daily basis, which is largely due to the personal approach of the program. Jackie and the students make a huge difference in the lives of the hundreds of students that they live and share their lives with at USP. It is amazing how the program has brought people of vastly different backgrounds together to achieve a mutual state of understanding and appreciation (Personal Communication, May 2009).

7.7 Chapter 7-8 Transition Notes

In order to better understand the convergence methodology being used by SIT Samoa instructors, a sample experiential education program and culturally responsive teaching tools, Chapter 7 provided an in-depth analysis of the SIT program, its seminars and its influence on both the SIT and USP students on the Samoa campus. Chapter 7 also provided a creative interpretation and exploration of the empirical data that was discovered during the time of my field study in Samoa working with SIT that helps to preface the evaluation and stories in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8

Teachers act as mediators or bridges between the two contexts and in doing so, assist students in making the transition between their society and the school. As a consequence, students are able to learn more meaningfully. Teachers have status and are role models in traditional societies, especially the rural communities, and therefore can be strong and influential agents of positive change. --Salanieta Bakalevu, N. Tekaira, V. Finau, and D. Kupferman.

Chapter 8 begins with section, 8.1 “My tribute to ‘The Green Banana’.” “The Green Banana” is a short story that I first encountered as an undergraduate in the SIT study abroad programme in 2007. I have fond memories of this short story, and also must credit my deeper understanding and inter-cultural awareness to Donald Batchelder, the author of “The Green Banana.” Section 8.1 also discusses the development of an inter-cultural student identity achieved through recognition of learning moments outside of the “traditional” classroom in experiential education programmes. Section 8.2 provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 8 and introduces Chapter 9.

8.1 My tribute to “The Green Banana”

An SIT Samoa student from the Fall 2012 semester describes a learning moment,

Despite what I had anticipated, the greatest lessons I learned in my SIT experience were all about myself and who I am in the world in relation to others. Even just being with the other American SIT students and realizing the vast differences between all of us, and feeling different from most of them was a huge lesson. I had never had that kind of opportunity to live and be in such close proximity to Americans from the other side of the country, and that was a huge learning experience in itself. (Personal communication, November 2012).

Education comes in many shapes and forms. A personal narrative is the axis upon which both oral tradition and academic class work turn, also how students learn and listen give the modes of their communications meaning. Many instructors and students recognise many different levels of knowledge/facts, but all knowledge/facts, at some point becomes necessary and appropriate depending on the situation. For example, in the article, “The Green Banana,” Donald Batchelder, a director of cross-cultural studies is used in first week of SIT student immersion into Samoan life. , It describes a situation in which he is travelling in Brazil by jeep. After his jeep’s radiator sprang leaks, and his engine began to overheat, the locals took some green bananas and pressed them against the radiator. The flesh of the green banana melted and plugged the holes naturally. Originally Batchelder was sceptical about this use of the green banana, the he was completely amazed that the radiator was fixed:

As a product of American higher education, I had never paid the slightest attention to the green banana, except to regard it as a fruit whose time had not yet come. Suddenly on that mountain road, its time and my need had converged. But as I reflected on it further, I realized that the green banana had been there all along. Its time reached back to the very origins of the banana. The people in the hamlet had known about it for years. My own time had come in relation to it. This chance encounter showed me the special genius of those people, and the special potential of the green banana. I had been wondering for some time about those episodes of clarity which educators like to call “learning moments,” and knew I had just experienced two of them at once. (1977, p.106).

For Batchelder this situation provided numerous learning and insights. He not only found a practical solution to a leaking radiator, he was emotionally transformed and connected to a new people/place/culture, as well as his own centre.

We tend to define the centre as that special place where we are known, where we know others, where things mean much to us, and where we ourselves have both identity and meaning; family, school, town and local region. The lesson, which gradually filtered through, was the simple concept that every place has special

meanings for the people in it; every place represents the centre of the world. The number of such centres is incalculable, and no one student or traveller can experience all of them, but once a conscious breakthrough to a second centre is made, a life-long perspective and collection can begin. (Batchelder, 1977, p.106).

Learning moments give students a dual outlook on their lives and the lives of others. Students realise that just as they process their ideas about the world through their immediate experiences, so do people from other cultures. The realisation that people from different cultures are anchored to identities and truisms just as Western identities are is emotionally transformative and can be frightening. Sometimes Western cultures are seen as central contributors to the growth of all identities. Ultimately this realisation empowers developing academic identities and introduces a shared “academic empathy,” with the potential to foster shared experiences. An alumnus from the 2006 SIT Samoa program further extrapolates this idea,

SIT Samoa not only illuminated my entire understanding of the Pacific, but it also provided me with an opportunity to tangibly connect to so many citizens of the region, allowing us to engage in the only true world learning I can imagine --- that that occurs among individuals. Our time in Samoa placed us among the everyday walks of Samoans, Fijians, Tongans, Tokelauans, Rotumans, Solomon Islanders, American Samoans, Papau New Guineans and allowed us to share in their lives. (Personal communication, May 2009).

An important centre of awareness appears the moment a student steps outside of their comfort zone and totally immerses him/herself in the present moment. After their immersion in an experiential education program, a student can sometimes realise that even though another’s ideology may stem from within different inner and outer cultures they both live within a similar society and thus a shared global culture.

If modern education seeks to expand possibilities for discovery and learning, open new communication channels and chances for mutual acceptance and recognition in wider worlds, students must be empowered to participate sensitively as cross-cultural sojourners in the centre of someone else's world. (Batchelder, 1977, p 106).

In an experiential programme MPCR students are placed in a position where their university knowledge is of little or no use to them because much of their learning takes place in non-academic spaces. Experiential education has the potential to change the value a Western society assigns to knowledge, and unequally distributed power-sharing relationships between Western and Indigenous peoples. When types of knowledge are acknowledged and the different perspectives aligned, students from Indigenous and Western backgrounds can work and learn freely and interchangeably together.

Ultimately, experiential education opens other valid routes to achieving knowledge and finding a functioning place within society. Some students will have the ability to interpret special meanings, gain new perspectives, combine ideas in new ways, and slice old concepts open to answer modern questions. Personal discoveries converge in a flow of learning moments, developing a healthy tug of war between the original centre of the world from whence the student comes and the new centre bring experienced. "Eventually the student has a strong sense of identity in two centres, in two cultures. Both have special meanings, and the student has doubled his or her self-awareness and cultural awareness" (Batchelder, 1977, p 107). The words of a student from SIT Fall 2006 explain this shift more fully,

The research I did in Samoa was on alternative energy development. I was privileged enough to spend a week as a guest of the power company as they finished installation of solar panels on the tiny island of Apolima, giving the villagers their first taste of 24-hour power. Company records were made available to me, and I was able to examine the issue from many different angles. I came to realize that what is best for people in one part of the world, is not necessarily the best for those in another. Political motivations can be harmful influences, and independent nations should be allowed to make their own decisions without being penalized by more developed countries that have already made their own mistakes. I did not go to Samoa with this intention or mentality, but I have not been able to look at global issues the same way since then. Now, more than ever, I still have a dream of helping those who are less fortunate than myself, but I have learned that it needs to be on their terms, not on mine. (Personal Communication, May 2009).

Experiential education encourages the discussion of issues such as adjustment and cultural shock without being harsh. Students become accustomed to laughing about any foibles they have already made and are more comfortable with the idea that misconceptions and misunderstandings are sometimes a part of the learning process.

Experiential education also provides a platform to discuss the differences between academic and non-academic intelligences and how they complement each other. After completing their program, or study abroad experience, most American students recognise the inherent global culture value of Indigenous traditions.

Exposure to a new place or a new skill within a setting conducive to opportunities for experiential learning helps both students and the host country people with whom they interact to grow and change. The process of learning is the last institutionalised path to empathy. Students move beyond remarks like, “I don’t know what to say to these people,

they can't even understand me and I can't understand them," and find commonalities or shared experiences. They become more comfortable with being uncomfortable. An SIT student from the Fall 2007 semester elaborates,

The Samoa program is not only academically important. I believe it has a great personal effect on the students who are fortunate enough to be a part of it. I know that I benefited from the learning experience that the Samoa program had to offer. Immersing myself in a culture that was etching out an identity as it battled with modernity and tradition taught me a lot about myself as a person who comes from a migrant-minority family establishing itself in the United States. Moreover, learning about people (entire region of the world) that escape the radar of most individuals and media showed me the way that I help perpetrate issues of Euro-centrism and colonialism. In a nutshell, going to Samoa changed my life. (Personal communication, May 2009).

The fear of going to a place so far off the beaten path, or rather, choosing to study abroad in a place other than Europe is real because a typical student usually gravitates towards that which is familiar in their Westernised academic experience. This type of academic ethnocentrism translates to a cultural divide and is ultimately detrimental to the relationships and discourses between Western and Indigenous cultures. Experiential education remains one of the least taken paths leading to explorations of and ultimately solutions for issues, and SIT Samoa students are seizing more and more chances to walk on it. A letter from a former SIT student speaks to this,

My decision to study in Samoa was made for many reasons. I majored in Sociology and Anthropology at Denison University and the program that you offer is focused upon those disciplines. I wrote my thesis about the influence that missionaries had in the South Pacific during the 1800's and I compared their impact to that of the whaler's who were also present during that time. I wanted to glimpse a fraction of all that I had studied and written and pondered. One of my ancestors was the first missionary to work in Micronesia. While I couldn't study on Ponape, I figured Samoa was the closest that I could get to the place where he lived and died. I chose to study in Samoa because I did not want to study in Europe. I did not want to study in Australia or New Zealand or any of the other

places where so many students chose to take their semester abroad. I did not want the parties and the light course load and the feeling that so many thousands of students had been there before me. I wanted to be in a place that would challenge me, my beliefs and my way of thinking. I wanted the opportunity to study in an intimate setting. I wanted to meet people from the place where I was. I believed that SIT Samoa would give me that opportunity and I was not disappointed. (Personal Communication May 2009).

Study abroad programs and experiential education curricula are equalisers, the curricula are designed to unite, and give both Western and Indigenous people pedagogical spaces for their voices.

Carol Lauritzen and Michael Jaeger (1997) use narrative as a metaphor for co-constructing curriculum....In this approach, learners are empowered/facilitated through stories to grow from their own prior knowledge to new understandings appropriate to their own experiences. This allows students to co-construct curriculum content through negotiation with their teachers. Students and teachers learn to negotiate ways and means of developing strategies for investigation and exploration, as well as ways of interpreting and representing their findings. In classrooms employing narrative storying, learners do not all have to arrive at the same point or understandings, and a diversity of learning styles and approaches is always admissible. (Bishop & Glynn, 2000, p. 5-6).

Study abroad/experiential education could also lead to the empowerment of Indigenous people because the curriculum seeks to reveal and discuss the transformation of their culture, the influence of western ideas, and responsibility. Being able to understand what has been done to, with, between and by Western and Indigenous cultures on a deeper level and gives students from different cultural backgrounds familiarity with intellectual tools of shared understanding in order to better manoeuvre their academic identities in the global system of education.

Both Western and Indigenous people impact each other's lives in unconscious and deliberate ways. Experiential educators and students must accept responsibility for any

issues or debate that arise from their stay and form productive relationships between the two cultures. A study abroad student is an ambassador without being aware of it; an experiential learner reaches out and participates positively with the people/place they live in.

This suggests a pedagogy where the participants in the learning interaction become involved in the process of collaboration and of mutual storytelling and re-storying. A relationship can then emerge in which both stories are heard, or where a new story is created by all the participants. (Bishop & Glynn, 2000, p. 7).

8.2 Chapter 8-9 Transition Notes

Living and researching within another culture hones the abilities of Western students to function with more coherent morality, and a sense of direction within their own cultures and identities. Chapter 8 discussed the ways an experiential education programmes and a host culture can provide Western and Indigenous peoples with situations and values that are similar, encouraging ideological breakthroughs and adaptations. Students need this connection. If Western and Indigenous people don't have mutual relationships and goals, then the roots of disenfranchisement will grow ever deeper and burrow into people's identities. Chapter 9 explores multi-perspective, multicultural student and society transformations through narrative, poetry and creative writing pieces.

Chapter 9

There are more than 1,200 indigenous languages, plus English, French, Hindi, Spanish, and various forms of pidgin to catch and interpret the void with, reinterpret our past with, create new historical and sociological visions of Oceania with, compose songs and poems and plays and other oral and written literature with. –Albert Wendt

Chapter 9 begins with section 9.1, “The Power of Creative Writing,” discusses aspects of the useful conveyance of experience through creative expression and the ability of story to create capacities to create a mutual understanding for people/students of different backgrounds. 9.2, “Story Development” provides a brief insight into the short story in the next section. 9.2.1. “Reconciliation,” is a short story that explores some negative impacts of colonisation on the Samoan culture and traditional/historical tribal epistemology. Section 9.3, “*Taualuga*, The Final Dance, and the most creative bit” sets the scene for section 9.4, “Souls of an Island,” a short story based on my own personal and cathartic cultural experience, along with my observation of the emotional changes a student may experience in an experiential education program. Section 9.5, “Chapter 9-10 Transition Notes,” provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 9 and introduces Chapter 10.

9.1 The Power of Creative Writing

My creative section seeks to exemplify this dynamic trend by presenting my field data through alternative means inspired by the oral tradition of Oceania. Oral traditions are based on truly listening to the speaker, the message, the history and the details of the story and the details of those giving and receiving it. Regardless if this interaction occurs

ritualistically, publically or privately, its contents are invaluable in their “creation of knowledge.”

A dead language is not only one no longer spoken or written, it is unyielding language content to admire its own paralysis. Like statist language, censored and censoring. Ruthless in its policing duties, it has no desire or purpose other than maintaining the free range of its own narcotic narcissism, its own exclusivity and dominance. However moribund, it is not without effect for it actively thwarts the intellect, stalls conscience, suppresses human potential. Unreceptive to interrogation, it cannot form or tolerate new ideas, shape other thoughts, tell another story, fill baffling silences. (Morrison, Dec. 7, 1993).

The new lines of creative thinking and writing I discovered during my time in Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand, as well as the transformative energy I encountered informed the intersection of my field data and story-telling.

A ‘story’ perspective allows the integrations of more types of information and styles of presentation than are customary in more conventional styles of scholarly writing and research. This demonstrates how research, theory, and practice are woven together to develop major ideas [...]” (Gay, 2000, p. 2).

The creative writing section of my dissertation utilises the employment of creative, reflexive, critical thinking that is lexically and syntactically expressed in the terminology and genre of short story and poetry, using symbolic representation and application of student and teacher experiences, including mine.

In order to reach non-academics, I have layered and tempered the written aspect of my research journey with different narrative voices. Gay (2000) explains,

Stories also are powerful means for people to establish bridges across other factors that separate them (such as race, culture, gender, and social class), penetrate barriers to understanding, and create feelings of kindredness (Goldblatt, 2007; Witherell & Nodding, 1991). In other words, stories educate us about ourselves, and others; they capture our attention on a very personal level and entice us to see, know, desire, imagine, construct and become more than what we currently are (Fowler, 2006, Harvey, 1994). (P. 3).

However, creative writing is no different from academic writing in that it can sometimes be mute, or lack efficacy as a medium. The variety of voices I use within the following section hopefully “trouble-shoots” this concern as I use both positive and negative experiences in order for my writing to achieve a realistic balance. Though, like all socially constructed genres of scripted living and learning experiences, creative writing can only give an approximation of an envisioned and hoped-for learning ideal. “Any good story has a setting and context, and develops around some topic, issues, event, theme, or situation of *felt* importance to the storyteller” (Gay, 2000, p. 4).

My stories provide greater emotional and meta-physical insights into the paradigm shifts and emerging education trends discussed in this dissertation. The voices and stories I use are guided and balanced by witnessed experiences of students/teachers I met/observed who have been transformed, informed and empowered through holistic experiences and methods. The acquisition of experience and therefore knowledge is inextricably culture-bound. To use an immediate example, both the Samoan/Pacific Islander and American students at USP start off being bound in certain ways by their home and host cultures, as anyone would be in that situation. Knowledge is an agreed-upon body of facts whose social construction is/was informed/guided by specific cultural epistemologies, methodologies and pedagogies. Both the Samoan/Pacific Islander and American students at USP struggle to transcend their cultural stereotypes of each other’s home culture.

Learning within and without a “classroom,” whether it’s traditional or non-traditional, simply as human beings is possible if the politics of hierarchy and social status are acknowledged, discussed, and understood in such a way that these politics do not lessen or aggrandise the possibility of eventual learning equality.

The experience of immersing yourself in another culture is never without some pain, but the enormity of the satisfactions to be gained overwhelms the minuses of the adventure. I once asked a friend, newly returned from two years’ fieldwork on a tiny Micronesian atoll, how it went. “Great!” he replied. Then he added after a thoughtful pause, “I’m still not sure how much I learned about the islanders, but I sure as hell learned a lot about myself.” For many of us who are anthropologists, that is perhaps what the long journey into otherness is really all about. (Tonkinson, 2000, p.168).

My use of creative language is an invitation and challenge to non-academics and scientific students to approach my dissertation on a more personal and interpretative level. I do not intend to “keep people out” of my research or writing by getting bogged down in terms and theories and typical structures. My academic nature has always pushed me to spend time in and out of schools looking for ways to express my multicultural identity without being labelled. I have never wanted to disavow any one of my racial heritages, by subscribing to one racial identity label. My ideas emerge from my own experience as a student and teacher with a minority identity trying to educate myself as best I can; I will always seek ways to challenge myself and my students through alternative or complementary ways of seeing and learning.

We are often accused of not writing for, and reaching an audience beyond the social sciences and humanities.... I would still respond positively to any request to write the same kind of story for a general audience again-and not simply because there is monetary reward, but because the act of doing it heightens one’s awareness of what is entailed in rendering “things anthropological” accessible to the non specialist reader. It turned out to be more difficult than I envisaged, but it was also quite refreshing to write in a looser and more creative mode. The need

for us to reach a much wider audience, to put our skills as cultural translators to better use in making what is alien and exotic meaningful and logical in Western cultural terms, remains as strong as ever. (Tonkinson, 2000, p. 170).

According to Allen and Unwin (1994) in *Tides of History: the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*:

[...] Literature and art are symbolic expressions of cultural identities, embodying their creators' visions of who they were, are, or could be. These visions encompass one or more aspects of culture, such as ethnicity, geographical context, gender, and politics. Although foreign scholars tend to view each of these as discrete entities, Pacific Islanders regard all aspects of life as inseparable parts of who they are. [...] Literature and art embody and express cultural identities.... Just as explicit expressions of identity may or may not accurately reflect internalized notions of self at the personal level, our views of who we are may or may not coincide with other people's views of us. Our cultural identities are therefore always in a state of becoming, a journey in which we never arrive; who we are not a rock that is passed on from generation to generation, fixed and unchanging. (p. 406-434.).

Stories create a common space of information exchange for students from varied backgrounds and have the potential to mitigate or heal stereotypes. "Narrative offers the possibility of transformation of perception through the expression of altered perception, and the opening out of awareness through unexpected encounters with an unexpected world." (Watson-Gegeo, 2005, p. 403). Sharing stories whether through oral tradition or written mediums allows educators and students to become academically engaged with their research topics and each other, through this, the process of re-humanisation can begin.

9.2 Story Development

Sadly more and more people from Indigenous societies are rejecting their traditional ways of learning or histories in favour of getting more involved in the industrialisation of

their developing culture.⁴⁵

I have chosen to interpret and depict Indigenous identity as: Female, Woman, Island, She, all with capital letters, as if these labels and symbols are titles and promises of specific gender-shared stories. It's always easier to say, well, it didn't happen to me, it didn't happen to my tribe or my family or in my country this isn't common behaviour and finally, what's so bad about that, the "brown"/Indigenous people have cars and supermarkets now. Rape is a violation whether it occurs in the mind or within and without a body. Disenfranchisement is not a word I use freely as it's not a word I became acquainted with gently as a minority.

When women suffer through any type of abuse, their first impulse is usually to shift the blame to themselves and try to explain away the horrible actions using their own body as a scapegoat. The similarity between a female rape/victim and the colonisation of an Indigenous culture is too eerie, like the sound of bone being scraped and scratched in a brick mortar and pestle.

I would be remiss that if in my exploration of education programmes in Samoa, I did not explore the underside of colonisation and pedagogical domination. Forcing a Western pedagogy on an Indigenous culture can sometime have long-term disastrous effects. The story of Scylla and Glaucus has taken place again and again throughout history with many different indigenous populations.

It is the responsibility of both educators and students to explore, discuss, and then

⁴⁵ Often this rejection is inevitable or not a matter of personal choice but rather the consequence of the inability to carry the debilitating weight of social change exerted upon individuals by globalization/westernization.

revolutionise the darker history of education in colonised countries, especially the small ones, in order to promote deeper cultural and pedagogical understanding of how our identities are impacted and formed.

9.2.1 Reconciliation

A warning as prologue:

There is a cave at Her centre

That you cannot enter.

Her hair weaves your fingers

Shadows of light linger

You are winter.

Meeting:

Your body lies to mine,

Bejewelled with ornaments of words.

Unwrap my ie!

My heart is simple; the red brushstroke of its beat

Seeks the warmth

Of cloth fallen around ankles.

She:

Who is She? Who am I? Who are you? Who are we together?

She is an island, The Island, The Pacific, Oceania, the space between words, lines and punctuation; the silences between cultures. She is isle and land, She is tourism, She is any brown girl- there, raise your head, look- She's the little girl with the honey voice, She's the tiny girl standing with her *aiga*-band in Aggie Grey's Hotel, She is me, She could be you; I bought taro chips from Her at the market.

You. You are a part of her identity, but you have a cock and colonialism too. You are an institution, an entity that harvests materials from her crotch; American, Brit, Japanese, Chinese, Australian, Kiwi, Expatriate you. We are accomplices in what we have stolen and are learning.

Part I:

The sovereignty of his tongue surprised her.

Water turned red red red and raped her. Wave after wave after wave crashed through Scylla's body like nausea. Wolf heads grew from her torso biting, devouring her vagina.

She didn't know that the sea - man and the waves would take turns shoving their edges around. Shoved his hand down between legs and worked his finger into an unwilling body.

Salt stuffed her throat with its taste, he stuffed her throat, he stuffed her throat and he

raped her with the thing, hard as ivory. She didn't know that her body would actually respond when touched, when fingers broke it, the evidence came. She didn't expect to be aroused by the violence. She heard them say, "Here suck on my sword and eat my seed." She felt the cock in her mouth. She felt him yelling, his rough skin contracting and releasing where they are joined. She shivered. She tried to hold her head, she drooled the word no, as she felt someone grab her nipples again yanking and ripping at her flushed skin madly until they're plum-coloured. She's slapped as an afterthought, and thrown, back first down onto the roots.

Her colour leaked and her colour leaked and the colour of her voice leaked everywhere, leaked onto the scattered green leaves, and her twelve feet crushed her voice's vibrancy into the ground.

Her skin her skin her skin; she used to be sweeter. She opened up, and allowed the branch in, closing to help the fit, her slightly chapped lips giving an itchy but pleasing sensation. The waves moved their arms back and forth holding the girl firmly as the friction increased. Scylla realised that she could either play along and get this over, or fight the change and never have the chance to escape.

Scylla let the waves pry her legs apart with their trunks. Scylla let them slice her open with their branches.

There is no chance of death because this isn't love = the secret to survival.

He stuffed her throat with salt and thorns that burned that burned away her skin burned away her skin, as she became something better. Burned her skin as she laughed and

laughed and laughed, she cried out in laughter after she saw his skin his skin his skin. Laughter laughter laughter when she was placed and grated over pale pumice, the sheets the sheets the sheets, soaking up the honey as she bled.

She wondered how much longer. Her body felt like it was being leached. She sucked the cock in her mouth harder and when his body moves to engulf her from behind, thrusts back at the one inside her hysterically, hoping...

She bled she bled she bled as the waves filled her throat with salt, and the eyes in her six heads wept.

Her skin burned and burned and burned as she swallowed the salt with its thorns.

She did not cry out, but she laughed and laughed and laughed until the salt became honey on her tongue. Her tongue tongue tongue that reached out beyond three rows of teeth.

She needed to shower after. She felt uncomfortable in her own smell. Sensual odour hung around her, her hair smelled like a dozen cigarettes, and her stomach felt oddly full.

The body has a memory too, and hers would tingle where it wasn't supposed to.

When Glaucus was done, he told her that he had a habit of only letting people in who caused him pain, pain helped him grow, forced itself inside his arms, and pulled up and away from him.

He raped her and she began to love him for it. His breaking down of her was delicately formed; the frames crafted in the brilliance of her rowdy flesh. When he touched her, he told her that she inspired him, and that she needed to hold her body in a certain way; her

softness wasn't supporting his thrusts.

She wasn't left with the pain, just the pressure.

Scylla looked around herself and at herself in horror, the calm shallows reflecting the bloody truth, knowing that this fate somehow was her fault. Her beauty had become ugliness, and the waters around her were no longer calm, they churned perpetually; she drowned, perpetually.

The way he cracked into my soul was forgettable, wasn't even original, but it was intricate, the way he fused his fingers onto her skin. He told her he was going to peel her layers down to the core of her. "You see," he said, "in your core you're beyond human. It's the purity I'm after." She relaxed after that, and sank into the design. She could see the words in his mind, the beauty that he was trying to pound into her. So she accepted her curse.

Her body neither surfacing nor sinking caused an appetite so great that it wasn't enough to just devour her anymore, so she began to eat the men who passed her by.

She never sought them out, oh no, they always came to her, because under this monster sprouting forth from her body, she was a virgin, and she knew that men were drawn to that secret. The promise of sacredness lingered in the scent of the water stirred by her many limbs, and frothed on the jagged rocks surrounding her rage, and reminded them in certain droplets during storms.

She welcomed the shame if it interrupted the nightmares.

This is the story of my body:

*Once upon a time upon the mounds,
Hidden in soft folds of limbs,
In hands clasping my flesh to your flesh,
You laid your ear to the pulse of my labyrinth.*

*My fingers scratched dirt-maps on your back,
Your tongue mirrored the smouldering paths*

On the ridges of my hips

*My island-form trembled and bucked and
You fell out of me.*

*Soul sprawled out, heels tucked into dust, patterns and blankets
I glimpsed your death from a pink and wooden bus on my way to Apia.*

“Why didn’t you follow my directions?” I asked,

*“Because when the tides stopped pulling me back, I did not know how to go
forward,” you said.*

“The song of my breath upon your navel is a signpost,

“A cairn

“Of your path joining my fullness.

"I am your mother. I exist only to cradle the holes your routes make in me."

I pray to the Peace Corps faifeau that silence will be the deed of your words and

You will not lose your language as you learn to read.

I pray to merchants and

They trade my wisdom for building sites.

I pray to pirates and

They poison my saliva with arguments over fishing rights.

Pray, prostrate,

Pray, prostitute-

Nights spent between breasts such as mine are costly.

This is the story of my body:

Once upon a time, you grew out of my soil.

This is also how I will lose you:

By telling you this story over and over.

Part II:

Glaucus went to Circe,

"I know you're going to ask me, 'what does it mean that I like to hurt people but feel bad about it afterwards?' and through the dead sound in my head your simple noise creates, what would you like me to say, what would make you feel better?"

Glaucus bared his teeth at her and Circe continued.

She told him, "You can make anyone do something once, hold their hand, touch their mouth and cry with them afterward, and make sure they know that only you have a chance at understanding their mystery, as a type of support, a loving relationship. You can even be bitter about this type of loving control. Then wait a few months and rape her again, flay her soul. And somehow it's less terrible the second time because she'll expect it and be used to it. When she realises it's wrong, she'll feel like you know her too well, and she'll never leave you, and you'll never leave her body's memory. She won't desert you, and loyalty will culminate between you two because you've helped to create this possibility, you gave birth in a sense. And besides, you now possess what you always wanted: she loves you unconditionally."

This is the story of my body:

I learn your prayers

In order to keep my hips wide under my long palagi-style skirt.

I know that you know that I know

We've breathed this dust

Scarred this trail on wrists, between trees

And painted footsteps with blood-mud before.

This is the history in my trauma:

When I call out for help,

I hear my ancestors crying labour pains.

After I give birth to brown children

I give them misspelled last names

And first names that echo music.

This is the hysteria in that which is historical:

I know that you know that I know

I dream about my grandmother's rape

And wake up with bruises from trying to hang myself.

Part III:

Years passed for Scylla, and her claws and teeth yellowed and hardened by the sea that held her. Her subconscious was now like that of an animal's. That's why her physical relationships have to be destructive. Some days she changes her mind though, because she sees something that's mesmerising, like the shadows or wavering reflections of those people she once knew. But basically, fundamentally, that's what she needs: the destruction.

Glaukus' mistake made Her immortal, made Her ugly, and he's the only one now that can

survive Her body. They are connected forever, repelling and replenishing.

This is the story of my body:

I have seen you more clearly than glass and metal and

You have touched the filed down edges of my points.

*The creased folds of your maps blur the lines of my body,
rub away the smudges of my kiss upon your lips.*

You have spied the way my form has split and

You have fallen in

Between my exposed crevasses and

The creased folds of your maps

blur the lines

of

my body

rub away the bloodstains

of your birth

upon

my hips.

9.3 Tualuga, The Last Dance

Synaesthesia is a phenomenon as well as a unique way of understanding sensory situations that are almost involuntary in the way that someone is surprised by experiencing one sensory reaction as a specific other sensory reaction. Synaesthesia is a powerful tool used to influence the way a person approaches an experience of intense emotional transformation.

A student in an experiential education programme is constantly being provoked by the host culture's surrounding synaesthesia. This viable translation between a situation and its aftermath becomes a type of potent poetry. The most common form of this phenomenon outside of experiential education can be felt while listening to music or viewing a film; when all of a person's senses are engaged, the sensations abroad in the human psyche become vast and deep. In the literary world, cross-sensory metaphors are used almost commonly to fully engage the reader. Some examples are, "bitter-wind, cutting laugh," and "sweet glance." In the world of experiential education, teachers encourage cross-cultural communication and interpretation. There are many stories, and thus, many truths, different types of lifestyles that should be respected for their similarities to a student's daily existence and struggle with their humanity, especially those stories of the underrepresented or misinterpreted.

A dual learning experience occurs when through the medium of basic human interaction, one ideology is juxtaposed to and synthesised by another. A dual learning experience combines both academic and non-academic pedagogies in the same curriculum. These types of curriculum place importance on the experience of the student(s) creating a holistic, immersive way of learning about self and culture. Experiential rather than purely academic education reinforces the lost art of making conversation and stepping outside of a comfort zone. Individuals from a Western culture might easily assume they have nothing in common with someone who lives a subsistence lifestyle. Genuine conversation uses uncomfortable feelings to fuel moments of synthesis. Conversation and communication possess the power to integrate western and indigenous identities.

“Communication” is a word that can equate with “understanding.” Human communication has many modes including the arts, (dance, drama, storytelling, conversation), reports, and through media and technology. Many students these days minimise the relevance of human communication; yet, without daily structured communication, potential for mutual understanding does not exist.

My journey of personal and academic growth in Samoa also further confirmed my need to explore the values other Indigenous cultures in terms of alternative and traditional education techniques because I realised that what I ultimately gave and took away from Samoa could never have been learned solely in a classroom. It is my hope that any person with multicultural/racial or indigenous heritage who reads this understands the importance of cultural interaction and intersections with both Western and Indigenous

peoples education techniques. It's far too easy to rely on age-old depictions of what Western and Indigenous identities "are."

I positioned "Souls of an Island" at the conclusion of my dissertation in hopes that my reader would be left with a story of emotional learning and growth incorporated within the framework of an experiential education programme and a combined and transformative pedagogy. This story cannot necessarily be replicated in thought, word and deed, but it can be replicated in intent or a shared commitment on behalf of student and teacher to push oneself beyond the boundaries and borders of presumed differences. If people in general actively acknowledged the need to explore their fears or stereotypes of other people and their cultures then the world would be more integrated and primed for peace and understanding.

My experiences in Samoa, both as a student and then teacher, may not be a definitive example of "true communication and exploration." Nor is Samoa the only place for such experiences. The reader can, however, review experiences they might have had within different cultural, religious or social frameworks and relate their personal and cultural learning moments to mine. Learning in any of its forms is precious and should be shared.

9.4 Souls of an Island

Point of View: Mine

Location: My nightmares

Time: All the time

Mood: Sickeningly nostalgic

There was a wood behind the fortress shrouded in dark, dark, dark; a wood, a grove, a forest, a jungle, an enclave, a bush marsh place. Brown and darkening, always dark. This place was all these things, but not alive. Not beautiful. That's why they tried to stay away, refused to look directly at it sometimes even though their whole beings were drawn to it. The girls would go to the edge of the visitor's yard and peer at it through the wire, loathing it, but also loathing themselves. They were not exactly helpless against it because they desperately believed that they were never helpless against anything, but that pull to their hearts and lungs and thoughts and hair-static hair was overwhelming. Nature has that macabre pull, especially nature is dead, dying, but it is nature all the same because the only nature inside the prison was yellow grass and four-leaved clovers; 12 feet of grass covered with miscellaneous picnic tables. Brown grass gets boring after the first day or so, so what choice did we have other than to give into the woods?

They noticed the two gates.

She had just dared the little girl to touch the fence as usual. Before the little girl's hand

touched it, almost before the little girl's hand reached out, older girl paused and when little girl looked at her, older girl's glance pointed little girl to the gates. Older girl didn't have to dare this time, didn't even bother. Older girl wanted her freedom from that yard so badly. Older girl brushed little girl aside. Even then little girl should have caught the strange scent, for older girl had never brushed anything aside, let alone the little girl.

Older girl loved the prospect of freedom more than little girl.

Older girl opened the second gate and suddenly, as if by magic, the wood was bursting through, murky and rotting, drenched in a cankerous odour. All the same, this wood wasn't the prison yard. That was just fine.

"I'm scared little girl, I don't want to do this alone," shivered older girl.

She dug her nails into her legs and scratched herself until she bled. She grasped the bottle, held it to her lips, forced herself to drink and poured some over her head, screaming when the Pinot splashed into her eyes.

Little girl shook her head as if to tell the older girl, "No, don't make me go in there."

"Okay, okay," older girl nodded as she peered into the wood delicately. "You watch from here though." She changed her mind, "Yeah, watch, make sure no one comes in after me. Don't let anyone close the door," she admonished. "Baby girl, I'm counting on

you to help me get back.” She took a few steps beyond the gate and the magic worked again. The wood came closer, or maybe she was closer to the wood. But anyway, little girl did not have to strain her eyes. She saw everything.

Older girl stood still, unnaturally calm and pensive in her body and as she breathed, little girl watched the outlines of the trees thicken and curl as if they were feeding on older girl. Little girl didn't cry out because it wasn't scary, and also because it wasn't worth it. The trees became more defined, and older girl dropped to her knees and let them form a loose circle with their warped and knotted branches. Her chilled voice broke the silence, “Baby girl, I can hear them! I can hear them sighing!” Her excitement was unbearable. Little girl looked down for a moment.

When little girl looked back up, older girl had broken off a twig. Little girl stared in horror, for older girl hadn't noticed that the tree was bleeding. Little girl screamed out her name and made like she was going to run through the gate to older girl, but the tree cried out, “No!” on a harsh breath with such ringing force, that little girl's body froze in an instant.

The tree turned to older girl, “Girl, did you not know that you're supposed to come alone to this type of freedom?”

Older girl stayed quiet. Voices of the other trees echoed the question.

“Who are you?” older girl asked.

“Ah, yet another piece you have managed to be unaware of.” The tree leaned forward, and bits of brown bark and blood fell into her hair, “Though not blissfully unaware of other things I see.”

“Trees can see?”

“Idiot,” the tree laughed, rather fondly. The other trees nodded their agreement.

“Whatever.” The trees were crowding older girl now.

“When I was you, not once upon a time, but when I was you, in fact,” the tree paused dramatically, “When I was you yesterday,” the tree sniffed her hair, “As usual, I got too sad.” She looked up and little girl could see older girl’s eyes trying to find her, so she started to wave hysterically, but older girl had gone blind and the whites of her eyes were glowing ferociously!

“What?” older girl’s voice was choking. Little girl had never seen her so vulnerable.

“Or maybe,” the tree considered, “Tomorrow, tomorrow when I am you, when I am alone as usual and sad as usual, very sad, I will finally realise that this is my life, this prison.”

A pause, “So I will go to my mother's stash, under the blue pillow on her bed, and grab her heroin needle and OD.” The tree giggled, “No wait, or, I will make my brother buy

me some liquor and I will drink and then run out to the highway near my house and play with the cars. No?" Little girl started to sob. Older girl stood enthralled. "Hmm," the tree's sigh was warm and friendly. The tree spoke with relish, "Wine yes. That's it. But, hmm. I think wine, and a bottle of pills, that's for you. Fragile and elegant. Almost Roman, without the bloody bath of course. Wine, pills and sadness. Tomorrow. When I am you."

"Okay." Older girl looked at the tree, then turned on her heel and started walking back towards little girl. Little girl didn't want her, in that moment; little girl didn't want to be like older girl anymore.

"Tomorrow, when I am you, I will do that. Yesterday when I was you, and I did something, after, when my spirit left my body, I fell because I didn't float. Not because I couldn't." The tree's voice became louder and louder when it realised she was trying to ignore it. "I fell into this wood, and when I landed, I grew like grain. I grew into a twisted sapling and then this tree. A wild tree. An untamed mass of dark bark and black blood for the harpies to feed upon."

Older girl crossed the threshold back into the prison yard, and gently closed the gate before little girl could slam it desperately.

The tree's voice came through, "The harpies cause me pain, and by doing so, allow me to feel pain."

As older girl told little girl to never speak of this again, little girl heard the gnashing of teeth and the barking of dogs.

When little girl woke up the next day, she woke up to a world filled with older girl, but also woke up to the news that older girl was dead.

Now, I have been left behind in this wild wood sometimes unbearably cluttered with different theories, pedagogies and histories; standing alone within and without my different educations; lumped together with other people's pain; trying to understand what has been taken and what has been given to me. I am simultaneously child and adult, trapped by presumed identities and bewitching with my indecision and ignorance, helpless with hope, and learning in anticipation, urgently begging the world to give her name back to me and to give me a name that grows.

Point of View: Mum

Location: England, in letters to a Native American one – night- stand

Time: Early to late 1970's, bumming about the UK

Mood: All over the place

Dear Hollow Tree,

No woman is an island unto herself except for me.

Did you know that sometimes I cry in my sleep, during dreams I cannot force myself to remember when I wake up? This morning I woke up at 4:48am, with my heart physically hurting, struggling to beat through this overwhelming sadness clinging to my breath and eyes. The only thing I knew/know is that I was and am dying... it's a haunting feeling, knowing that you are dying and you can't stop it or control it in most circumstances- and I ignore it most of the time, but for some reason, I couldn't ignore it today.

I don't know why England affects me so... I grew up here; the literary parts of me, the parts of my ruined soul that know how to write and speak were taught and nurtured in England after being kindled by tragedy in the states. The memories I spoke about in my last letter (sorry for going on) occurred before I was raped, and I've been back since- as you may remember me taking off for a week or a weekend when I was still a student- but I didn't go back to Oxford, I only went back to London, and that was for stays no longer than two weeks- whereas during my childhood, I was there for two-three months at a time, living in the university dorms with my mum-we had the attic dorm with this ancient washing stand and view of the gardens, tea shop and the river... and the forest of stone towers on the horizon.

When I travel I leave the worst parts of myself behind because I'm so caught up in the discovery of these other cultures and lands... and nothing negative has ever been able to touch me in Oxford... in London yes, but London has a different breed of younger British people who are not quite scholars... I grew up around old Merlins and the magic and

mystique of the written word- London is for people who like to do drugs, drink to much, smoke too much and spend too much money and fuck... all things I do on occasion just to prove a point, but not who I am...

I had a really bad self-mutilation incident the last time I was in London... but that was for a very specific reason that has nothing to do with England.... Oxford, in the grounds of Magdalene College to be precise, where I grew up is so beautiful in the summer. I wish you could step into my head and heart and see with my mind's eye what I am seeing right now...I have no words to describe the island I stepped into when I lived there.

England is a mystical and ancient fortress of words that, when I am there, keeps the rest of the physical world out of my head.

No, I don't want to escape loneliness or suicide... I can't... I have tried to, I have tried to ignore the impulses which makes these horrible and drastic emotions build up inside me- and burst- and I can't control the deluge of the loss of my identity... and when I try to work through these impulses- I think about it too much- my psyche doesn't react well to weekly- or even monthly meetings with a psychologist to discuss this... I don't know what to do... it's something I've been dealing with since childhood- and certain incidences in my life have aggravated this disease in me- but, it's always been there.... the way I deal with it now is to compartmentalise- which I am so good at.... when I feel awful, even if it's out of the blue, I acknowledge it and then try to move on.... the only problem with this is that I get stuck sometimes, and it takes more than me to free me from the mire..

I am afraid of getting too close to people because of this because 1) this is my problem to deal with, 2) People prove over and over again how when I need them the most they won't be there, and 3) I never want to cause anyone any pain, especially about something they can't control... I have no right to depend on anyone.

I agree that America makes it easier to live because of all our distractions... I think, out of all the places I've lived- which aren't that many, but they are varied... America is the easiest place to ignore the rest of the world and become so self-centred and selfish, because literally our culture tells us that independence is our most valuable asset... so there is no sense of greater community.

The communities that do exist there are their own entities that are so difficult to exist within if you were not born and/or raised within them. It's rare for a person to reach out and connect with someone of a different race or culture there/here (America is always in me because I carry around the intangible cultural flavour- a result of being born and raised there) on the deepest of levels- and the relationship/connection last- which is why biracial/intercultural couples still fascinate me... That's not to say that other countries are all open and friends with each other and there's no division... but America, like our department stores has this phenomenon en masse! We are not islanders- yet we build no bridges.

I also agree that no matter how you do it, as you experience more of the world, it will

change you and tie you down. I think you're a bit afraid of the "freedom" I talk about- but you're also so curious... and that's what makes me think there's a bit of fatal and dark attraction from you to me in our relationship... I have let go so completely of this life, and I will do it again... and you're so so curious...

When you go somewhere with the intention of staying for a long time- your soul and personality and perceptions are more vulnerable and more open to the new land- and thus your connection to and your experiences are more profound in the long run, and juxtaposed to this transformation of self, are the pieces of your American identity shifting and falling off and contorting to shape themselves into something a bit more disconnected with the mainstream culture. Your choices and viewpoints become more global, and career choices you make also become more varied as well as your personal tastes. It's like eating chocolate cake, and then tasting chocolate cheesecake; you're never able to get over the difference in flavours, and that first taste stays with you forever....the longer you stay, the more family you gain and lose... and the more you break and open and reform...

Dear Hollow Tree,

What I feel about you is so tangled. I'm angry, and frustrated at your lack of understanding about yourself and how you affect me. I loved who you were, and I am in love with who you will be in ten years, five years... after you come back from Peace Corps-because I feel it in my soul that you will turn into this amazing person, and your

love for the world will change people's lives for the better, and you will be changed for the better... the light in you will become so bright- and it will match the beauty outside.... I used to think that I would be a part of it- but I'm not so sure it's wise, I'm not so sure you want me to be, and I'm not so sure I should be. I do agree with your statement that we have shared a lot- and it was necessary- more so for you to share with me, and know you are capable of achieving that type of intimacy with another human being. I only hope in the long run I have given you more positive experiences than negative ones. What I feel for you now is not love... I don't know what it is... maybe disappointment in both of us, such sadness... I don't hate you- but that's not because I don't know how to, it's because I've decided not to, and instead decided to hate those impulses in me that cannot stop reaching out to you, even when I know you don't know what to say, what to do, and are following my lead.

Haven't you noticed that I like to hurt myself on more than a physical level? I get myself into these situations that I know will hurt me, and on some level, I think I enjoy it. Pain reminds me I'm alive, and distracts me from the fact that I am rotting in this perpetual numbness that hovers and clings like a palpable tangible second skin. There have been maybe two times when I haven't used pain as a crutch-no three... In England- all my time here which has blurred and merged with my personality now... I dream in British smells, places, and rain. I wake up sometimes at night, my hands tingling from the touch of stone they've brushed in memories and green afternoons in Oxford when I'd scrape the college's walls with my palms like Ariadne must have as she waited for Theseus to defeat the Minotaur.

Rain outside my attic window, frosted glass combining with greyness and blueness and Earl Grey Tea and English breakfasts and scones and Pam, dear old girl, who looked after me whilst I was home from class, with the purple eye shadow and red hair, turning down my covers in the morning, calling me "luv" like she did her own grandchildren. Being turned out every morning to run in the gardens with the deer and my journal; and the trees in England all know my touch and breath and secrets... a child's secrets are dreams of the magnificent adventures she will have as she grows older. Languages, libraries, Englishes, doors, cobbled streets, wearing black dresses and gloves to dinner, Celtic crosses, old churches, graves filled with poetry and poets, being named and nameless all at once... vaulted ceilings, my eyes always to the heavens, Aslan my lion, Gandalf... maps of rivers! I am always surprised when I find out islands have rivers... somehow I never even consider the fact that maybe, just maybe water can connect rather than isolate. Punting, luncheons, the only words of happiness I ever wrote were written in Britannia...

I remember who I was before, and the dreams I had- and then the dreams turned into these awful living, walking terrors- and my stories became fragmented, and I then I stopped telling stories, and then others told my stories while I lay dying, and then I went to college... In England I am cleaner - well, I feel cleaner, but only because no one has figured out how to see me yet. I am alien to the land, but not alien to the culture. I am alien to the people, but not to their society. I fit in but am not known... it's strange... in America I feel like I don't fit in but am known... and I don't know what is more, well

bearable in the long run... ever catch yourself thinking like that?

And yes, I absolutely do think if people were NOT afraid of the unknown they'd act differently. They'd say and feel what they really want to earlier- and they'd let themselves fall and be completely absorbed into what they're doing, where they are...and then some would let themselves be content and never leave their homes and never have biracial children because they wouldn't see the point in taking a stand... but doesn't this sound familiar... because there are people who aren't afraid of the unknown in themselves-like me, and others I've met in random places of Europe... and we live like this sometimes- in our own dreams instead of the dreams of others... I'm not afraid of the unknown- I'm not afraid of death, I'm not even afraid of pain-I'm afraid of what I know about human nature and the fact that no matter what, we cannot stop from hurting each other... I'm afraid of the unconscious impulses we all have within ourselves to destroy ourselves... I'm afraid of the Siren's song... because I think that's what it's about... this impulse.

As for Odysseus... as he and his men were passing the island of the sirens, he had his men tie him to the mast of the ship so he could listen without being able to jump overboard... I wish someone would tie me down, so I could listen... so I could hear and see into people... and not want to escape the longing and loneliness I find inside by suicide; I wish I could stop my ears from cutting themselves on the weakness of my own soul... What does it mean to be "tied" down though?

I've gone on too long-

Dear Hollow Tree,

Siren: a dangerous bird woman or women who lure sailors en route to home with their song. Siren: an enchantment in the form of bloody claws and woman parts that rapes your silence. Siren: a beautiful paranormal thing that is too ugly to let go of you before she loves you.

I wait I wait I am waiting for you to say something to fix this... and I don't know why I wait for words that you've never been able to hear in yourself. I am going to starve in this frozen pose; a statue wasting away to poetry and the air where breath used to be. And and and... I wonder if the magic and singing whales I heard in you were simply an echo of what I heard in me... and the siren's song you've been singing all the while was just as empty as my heart right now. I have words, you have silence... we were friends because you needed stories and I knew the names of the stars. I am flame and ash and air. I am your fumbling alchemy, your powdered rust and grainy gold... I am what to you? You don't even know how to love me because the way you see is crusted with rituals, and your ears belong to the sirens.

I spend so much time waiting waiting waiting... for spells for magic for people to say what I know they can say want to say won't say. I walk through the surf of other's souls, and try to duck and glide, duck and surface under over in the waves of emotion. I am a strong swimmer and I never drown, even when I want to. And I hear it- I hear the sirens

calling from inside people. I can't block it out! I can't stop myself unless I cut off? My ears. And I am ravaged by what I hear- the sirens, the curses, the patterns of betrayal, the ebb and flow of lusts that become my lusts... the rhythm of lovers that become my lovers; I love him, I love her because they love me for a time. But loving someone doesn't mean you can hear them... loving someone means you sing the siren's song with their choir of insecurity. I want to find the whales! Where are they hiding... deeper and deeper in the water, down... always down where I can't breathe for long... but I see them sense them and the moments encapsulate knowledge beyond belief: O dryad, this is peace! This is Elysium where the water takes your memories... and you are dangling thing with wet roots woven into the music of an Ancient that does not need to break and surface.

My dear nymph; we are feathers off the backs of harpies who can neither swim nor walk. We see everything, we haunt the chasms in people, we ignore our stench thus allowing people to love our fierce beauty.... we entrance, we entrance, we pretend... we fly we fly we run; we are awesome awful alone. We chant the echoes of the whales and do not sleep.

My silhouette is a flashing, throbbing pain against the night as I claw my way over sand. I have surfaced. I have come up to break as I tell the truth: I love someone that my sirens have composed out of my own insecurities. The sirens may have written the shape of your mouth and the sound of your tongue, but I am the one that fed the demons with what I pretend to be, the lies I am; the flesh that inhabits my soul.

...I can only hope that if I have a child, I do not have a daughter. I fear she would be too much like us, too much obsessed by places and emotions and people... and lifestyles that cut her off from the rest of the world.

Dear Hollow Tree,

This is it. I have nothing left for you. I've been back in America for almost six months now, working at my new volunteer job at the prison.

The drugs are long gone, and I don't even know the person who I used to be. She's changed. Well, maybe she drowned or the sirens got to her? She's somewhere in the ocean between here and England. I don't think I'll ever go back there, or rather, I think if I ever was to go back, I would not be able to love myself the same way I did when I was last there. Because, essentially, that wasn't love I felt for you or myself.

I only saw the distances. Now I understand intimacy.

I don't like the distances. And I know you're going to laugh when I tell you my next bit of news- you're going to laugh at the irony of it all, but I think you probably know what's coming: I've fallen in love with a man imprisoned for life and I'm pregnant.

Point of View: Daddy's, in letters to my mum

Location: Maximum Security Prison

Time: Early 1980's

Mood: Philosophical

Hi Hon:

I am sitting here in my room, thinking, partly about myself and reflecting too, upon my wife and daughter. About me: I am thinking about how the later years of my life have become beset by continuing heart problems and the decisions I have to make about that sooner or later. The problem is that in my mind theories aren't nearly as helpful as someone's own personal experience. I just want someone to tell me what happened to them under similar circumstances and let me take it from there.

About you and Tree: I am thinking about the state my difficulties must put you and her in, particularly you. I don't know why I always think of Ecclesiastes every time I stand at the door here and wait for you and Tree. Sometimes I see just how much your lives are intersected with mine. Sometimes I see the pivotal dimension of you both coming through the door, that is, I see (you especially) leaving the prison bored and resigned to my circumstance. Sometimes, I see you returning home physically drained from the round trip. Each time I reflect on these concerns there is added cause for me to worry about how both my wife and daughter, because of my circumstance, have to go on day in

and day out, living in submission to forces beyond their control. As if you're in prison too.

You tell me not to worry about you and Tree, but I can't help it. I'm not like a lot of the guys in prison who so easily take their hands and cover their eyes and not see the problems of their wives, sweethearts or relatives. I'm not selfish when it comes to someone I love or care about. Although the answers to my worries seem beyond me, I don't give up hope in finding some direction and directive. Like relative to my physical infirmity, my heart condition, I mentally recite the twenty-third psalm and doing that gives me faith and comfort.

But, nonetheless, rather than complain of my circumstance, I want you to know that I get some strength and encouragement from you and our daughter too when I observe you pushing your way toward the institution. I see in that scene two of God's most beautiful gifts. I get some encouragement too from the trust I have in and the love I have for both of you. So instead of complaining of my circumstance, I thank God every morning I wake up. With all of the frustrations and difficulties that I face and there are many, I never lose sight of the fact that I am privileged to be married to you and that God gave us Tree.

Just looking toward the road leading here and contemplating that soon my wife and daughter will be coming into view, is an elevating experience. Tree's terrific too. Somehow, while we find things so difficult, she seems to be able to see the truth of her

parent's situation and understand. I believe a child needs a simple definition of right and wrong. I wonder how we are going to make our daughter understand why her father must be punished in prison because he would not allow someone to harm him. The truth is that the court simply did not believe that my motive for taking someone's life was a fear of losing my own.

Anyway Hon, this is all to say that I just felt like writing to you. Sometimes I don't really talk to you because something else is bothering me. I can't think effectively when I'm dealing with deep emotions although I do get around to letting you know what's bothering me. And what's bothering me now is that I miss those moments of closeness that you and Tree allow me to experience when you're here.

With love of you both,

Earth, hide me. Grasses of the earth, hide my flesh.

My dearest Little White Dove,

The decision to neglect my health isn't sudden. I've considered doing this for quite some time; I've just been fortunate, that's all. That is up to the time, three weeks ago, when I found myself lying on the table in the infirmary. That evening while I was laying on the table, a part of me was saying, "Please God, let this be it!" while another part of me was

saying, “No! There is still hope of a good outcome of all this even though you don’t want to believe it.”

But you know what, I don’t really care too much about living; what’s so horrible about dying anyway? I know you don’t like to hear me say it, but I have reasons not to want to live, some of those reasons very painful. Prison is somewhat like a last frontier. It’s a place that’s hardly a name on anybody’s lips. It’s a place where, after you’ve been here a while, your whole being becomes empty because the friends and loved ones you left behind somehow found someone else to take your place in their hearts.

Do you know what it means to a man in prison to be able to say to someone on the “free side” of the wall, “Thank you for my life and to some degree my sanity?” Do you know what it’s like, how it feels to be caught up in a set of circumstances which for all intents and purposes are irreversible or seem so? Whatever my transgressions, do you believe they warrant me spending the rest of my life here with a bunch of people who do not and apparently can not conform or submit to the discipline of society?

Look it! Sometimes when I find myself explaining me to you it is difficult to say what I want to say in white-man words. You see I don’t understand how you, or anybody else on the free side of the wall can refer to a prisoner’s existence here as “life” or “living.” I can’t tell you my concept of this in words you are familiar with, but if I were to tell you my concept of this as an American Indian it would go something like:

I have a very real and mystical perception of all life. I perceive all life as a continuous, all-encompassing eventual flow and of man's complete oneness diffused with this eternal stream. I see this stream (not as a White-man's scheme) but as many complex dimensions, one in which man, the tree, the rock, the cloud and all the other things are simultaneously in all the places they have ever been, and all things that have ever been in a place are always in the present there, in the being and occurring.

Dear Hon,

I guess I am feeling very strongly about writing this to you before I go to the hospital, although it's still pretty iffy, to actually have surgery. I think it's much easier to say things to you in a letter, not because I don't love you enough to discuss these things while looking in your eyes, but because I tend to get tongue-tied and have difficulty speaking all the necessary words.

First, I'd like to make a statement I've made and remade and remade: I love you. I've not only stated this over and over and over but shown it through incident and example. I still perceive you as I did the first time our relationship opened: You are comfortable to be with and loveable and you are a warm human being; I feel that our relationship is the real thing and a joy for me although there are times in our relationship when we are not at our best, obviously. Our relationship has gone much further than your family or anyone else for that matter ever expected or intended. Although, I must admit that I have failed in my

efforts to let you know how much I really care for you. I think this is why the future development of our relationship appears to be arrested and why we should strive to come back to the relationship that we knew in the beginning. Because of Tree, I feel that we are at that moment in our relationship where we cannot run from our responsibility to her just because we have unbroken visions of what we are/are not to each other.

Little did we know that two years and eleven months after our relationship began, we would be husband and wife and later, the parents of Tree. For all this, I hesitated to project when we met, that something like this would happen in our future together. What has been proven since, is that we've been committed to each other all this time and that that commitment has been and is a solid element in our love for each other although you don't always see it that way. Sometimes this misleads us into complacency though. Sometimes our hopes for us become an empty shell. For example the Department of Corrections offers us all the formalities of being our own masters, or at least we sometimes tend to believe this, but the foundation of what we believe becomes weakened when we acknowledge the rules evolved towards me, as a prisoner and you as an outsider.

A second example: our relationship began with a foundation, love, not the fake broken word, but love that was! This love seemed to offer us all the formalities of being lovers, but this belief weakened also because you refuse to let me be who I am and you're forever accusing me of standing between you and the things you wish; you can't see that this causes most of the disagreement between us.

But the point I want to make is that just as we have to take the system, its ways, in stride and not complain too much, being aware that there's always available to us the.

We were trees in my dream

planted with hands made of solace and anger.

I dreamed fingers took our seeds, mixed them as atoms are mixed

by the wind like dust;

inseparable, innumerable particles of souls and hunger

sifted together through an old-fashioned sieve.

The truth of our story was caught in the wire

as the myth and flour pressed through, passed through.

We burrowed in my dream

deep, deep- reaching down into soil

roots smouldering among the embers of stillness.

We stretched in my dream

up, up- grasping the wisps of memories in the air

branches whispering and then creaking names of people who were once familiar.

We made love in my dream- as trees do
our buds opening between sounds of rain and light
our brown limbs intertwining above our trunks as
the bark of our skin was tattooed by the song of nests and birds.

You died in my dream.

A flash of lightning ate you up.

Your wreckage of ash and burns scarred my eyes
an axe cleaved my trust.

I lit the fire in my dream

the embers ignited my heart.

I dreamed I pried us apart and used the wood of your breath to build a bed on which

I touch myself to torture you.

I am only yours when I sleep.

This is not a love story I will write down on parchment.

I do not miss you.

I do not hate you.

I am not lonely.

Point of View: Mine

Location: Dream memories and long flights further and further into the Pacific

Time: All the time

Mood: Sad and bitter

She paints the drugged honey of secrets on her body,
Brush of whispers and fingers,
Palate of “others.”

She layers his love in her deeds like
Water over rock under sky,
Steel over fire under earth.

She smiles with teeth of stained ivory,
Eyes of amber fixed in the wood of an old god,
The echo of chaos and coins laughing in her temple.

She is a writer not a poet:
The fact that makes her a liar,
The story that makes her a thief,
And the nightmares that make her a dreamer.

I dream in words and sounds. No pictures, no scents, no emotion? Just a word spelled out, a gulp; maybe a passing shadow as my body shifts in the moonlight. The letters of the words I dream are incredibly solid and so present that they are tangible.

What wakes me up finally are not the acrid sounds of a throat clearing as it grates back the bile of sleep... oh, not even the harsh meanings stuck under my eyelids like burs, no what wakes me up and riles me ready for the day is movement. My movement I make as my hands clench and unclench to grasp the words, the sparks, the stings and momentary pleasure of finding resolution in the dark flaking off the mystery. As Pablo Neruda put it in sonnet XVII, "*te amo como se aman ciertas cosas oscuras, /secretamente, entre la sombra y el alma,*" and this is the sentiment I breathe in and out as I wake and try to give meaning to something inanimate. I wake because I am still alive. I am still alive because--

I don't know why I love my father.

The words I see in my sleep are dead. I don't mean dead as in, "these words are part of a dead language." These words are dead because the man who wrote them is dead. He was dead before he put pen to paper.

My father is dead and my mother has gone back to England. My father is dead and now I dream of his words. When I dream of his words, I feel like my throat is bleeding. I feel as if a hairbrush made of glass and thistle is being tugged out of my throat. The bristles

squeal a bit as they snag against my teeth and my chapped lips try to keep still, but the pain of the drawn out sound makes them tremble.

I can't let go. Still I can't seem to loosen my voice, my own words. All I can speak are my father's fears and all I can see is the dust being blown off the boxes of his letters my mother has stock piled against the invasion of new memories and new lovers. How could she bear to love him, have him love her when they never even got to touch? I don't understand how the love they carried for each other was even real.

My father, even when he was alive was never a body. He was the letters and stories he sent me from prison. He was the cartoon he drew on my envelopes. My actual memories of him play tricks on me, lie to me, confuse me and refuse to give me clarity of specific details. I believe though, that even if my memories were to yield I wouldn't know what to ask for, happiness or sadness. I don't know what's more painful to remember.

I do not recognise what type of thing I am. I do not even know if I'm a person, and I am not sure if I'm alive. I know I feel anger and sadness, but that assures me of nothing. I have no growth- I do not know how to communicate unless I am dreaming, and in my sleep, I encounter nothing that's real? Or maybe dreams are the only aspect about me that have a right to be real.

There's an impulse in me, which I fight all the time. I have such an urge to wander, and the urge is insatiable. I am addicted to abandoning everything and everybody attached to

me because... because it lessens my guilt. The passion I have for travel is perverse in a way too, because it destroys the bridges I have built between myself and the people I leave behind. The travel hurts me, but it also reminds me that I am alive enough to be hurt.

I was named for the tree, and I am a tree to some extent, solitary and quiet and brown, but I have no roots.

Point of View: Mine

Location: Museums in Hawaii

Time: August, middle of the day, 2007

Mood: Curious and disgusted

She's made a tourist haven out of her body. And no, I'm not calling her a whore, at least not yet. She's developed herself to be common, where she used to be unrefined. The ore that was in storage in her skin, hair, nails has a different sheen now. We're not impressed. We're not intrigued. But isn't that the price? The river between her thighs and between her eyes, from her eyes, even her tears are mapped.

We're not afraid of her dark hair, her tangled crotch. They are not hidden by the green and the gods in the green any longer. She goes to church now.

She was the one woman I wanted to paint with my own blood, but couldn't. Now her colour runs together like a lesser sunset on a cheaper beach, specialising in "family entertainment." What did she get in return for her immensity?

Hope does not reside in crisp green flakes.

Her mouth fashions barbaric sounds which ruin her beauty, now a dim promise of sex behind the fish market.

Not a scent.

And not brown and black.

And not a scent.

And not coarse.

And not a scent.

And not lyrical.

And not innocent.

Not this and this and that, or a night so thick you could pet the stars. Or the night when she gave up capturing you and touched her tongue and fingers along the indent of a strange man's spine, tattooing his back with her soul's design and breath and rhythm.

Where is she?

Where did she go?

Is she in some museum, on some hill, in some forgotten erotic corner where fat bald men and spandex-clad women emit foul odours as they press close to the glass and the sharp of her spear?

Her betrayal has made her into a myth and set her homeland aside forever in loneliness
and poverty and dance.

Sex Trade:

She is one of those girls, who sold her body for a painting,
expecting the sadness, not the elation.

The payment left her with nothing:
a face and a fistful of brown hair, because somehow
these things were not her body.

Her legs, breasts and arms, she saw them being prepared for children.
Her vagina was soaked in wine and with naked skin glistening, put in a jar.

Teeth ground down for Jell-O and diamonds,
Nails sent off to a rich man.
Why not her face?

Understandably, she basically sold her body
So she wouldn't have to comb her hair,
But of all things, she expected,
Or maybe she hoped
That her face would go first.

The painting was not just one obvious colour either.
That's why she gave up whatever people would buy.
She sold flesh for a soul
And now the thing in her that refused to believe
Is exposed and flayed in the texture of the gritty oil.

Point of View: Mine, letters to my best friend

Location: Samoa

Time: Fall semester, 2007

Mood: Bewildered

Dear Friend,

I'm in Samoa. My favourite parts are the brilliant visible stars, which I always forget to look for because I am so used to seeing them obscured by something. It was so fantastic last night, when we were laying out on the grass just before two am, because I looked up and saw this filmy gauze of star debris.

Yeah, this is my base camp, even though our group starts travelling for long village stays beginning next Thursday, but I am back at classes in the dorms at the Uni here- and I'll be able to receive mail. I had yet to sit down and actually pen a letter to you, even though I've thought about it, 'cause you're like one of the few people right now who'd be able to hear me.

Went to the RLS Museum, and then climbed the hill to where his gravesite is- above Apia. Almost bought a copy of the Suicide Club then thought the better of it, and settled for reading Treasure Island instead. His house is almost perfectly preserved down to the two lion-skin rugs, and I had to walk through the museum barefoot on *laufala* or *pandanus* mats- a unique experience. The guide was Samoan, educated in New Zealand then came back to Samoa to be with his family-great emphasis on Christianity and family structure here- and so it was cool to hear him speak about RLS's time in Scotland-def. smiled to myself there.

The island girl has always been in me

Silence, distance, and brown sheen of sweat.

My body in tune with crashing tides

My mood, a reflection of shimmering heat.

I wear coconut earrings and begin to eat *keke pua'a*.

I glare at *palagi*, I glare at men, I let someone buy me a drink at the bar.

Dear Friend,

Samoans don't think of death as a taboo subject, in fact death is more naturalised in this culture because it's something that you can't hide from. Because this island is so damn small! Death is talked about daily and is completely contextual. The Americans however, fear death because there are no societal institutions that deal directly and openly

with death- in terms of natural death and unnatural death. People who have not been exposed to it tend to shy away from the subject and assume about the emotions of someone else.

There is a lot of fear in this world and in humanity in general, and I believe that all fear is really the fear of loss because when we're capable of losing something, it proves our mortality. This is why people also fear love and the betrayal found between the finite layers of communication and change.

I think to understand death, you have to be willing to realise that you're changing all the time and that is what dying really is. To change is to die, or one way too, so take the path less travelled by. A coward just lives on, oblivious to the turmoil.

Dear Friend,

The day the rainbows shot out of the sea through the conduit of my body, I held the wind trapped between my hands and mistook the search for God with the search for forgiveness.

I opened my mouth slightly and one of my gardenia coloured teeth scraped my bottom lip. I tasted blood and cinnamon, dove under the waves, my obsession with my taste waning. I resurfaced again, salt in eyes, and tried to stare at the sun head on. The honey and butter smell of the hidden beach swelled around me as my skin warmed, familiar with the texture of the scattered clouds above. The sea and the sky were a melding of

endless blue and blue. I felt guilty stealing this time.

I dipped my head back into the water, my curly hair fanning out and my mind suddenly crowded with echoing questions.

I came to this chain of islands and this beach for what this space possesses. I am escaping the awkwardness of myself and my beliefs. I have moments though, when I find myself outside the elements, even though I am usually sitting inside something closed off, plucking at my feet, filing down my blisters, blurring the pages of other people's lives with my sadness. And boldness.

Tears come, and when I'm alone, my body refuses to make a sound to reinforce the lost and dead images I am craving. I don't know why my mucous cannot not share with others, what is common inside everyone.

I think I came to Samoa to die, and my body holds this truth captive from others and my eyes, the only part of me controlled by my soul, are rusting gates. (Oh, you'll like this next one), my vagina holds a prayer. I feel lucky though, because the death of my father has given me an excuse to hide away in the act of his dying. I'm going to a village tomorrow to do a home stay and learn how the Samoans live traditionally.

Dear Friend,

In the Samoan village, the first night, as I lay in my bed *i le fale o lo'u tina Samoa*, I felt this unknown emotion creep up on me, and I realised later on, it was helplessness. I'm in a culture that seems so far away from my own, and I can barely understand the language and I am intensely uncomfortable at the way people look at me. I don't like the fact that my Samoan mother and her children's gazes were so attentive, to my eyes and facial expressions, as they asked me halting questions about my parents and then about the death of my father.

I took the constant vigilance of my person as extremely offensive at first, even though class and discussions on Samoan culture had warned me about the interest and caretaking that the family has for their *palagi*. It was so hard to not respond to all this rudely. Especially the questions that I felt were probing, when in actuality it was just genuine concern. I didn't even know genuine concern existed without a motive. Refreshing huh?

My emotions weren't ready to handle the concern though. So, for the first few days, I pretended to be happy and forced myself to spend the majority of my time with my Samoan family, convinced that this was the only way to deal with my spacial issues. But also, I was just sick of my group and their American bullshit and insight into my grief.

I have had terrible and painful feelings surrounding my own family in America, and the way I deal with it is to usually avoid a subject or stop communicating all together, which

has become exhausting. I honestly believe that it would be impossible for people to actually care about me and for me to care about myself so I try not to get too close to people because I don't want to disappoint their assumptions as to who and what they think I am. But I realised or at least a part of me did, that in Samoa, I am among familiar strangers who only know what I tell them with my body language, which doesn't lie. It's the most revealing communication a person had. I think a part of me opened up to my Samoan mother and her family; once they found out I could sing, they talked me into singing all the gospel songs I knew for them, and this is something I rarely do, and when they appreciated that part of me, I started dancing! Then I taught the kids to do some African dances I learned when I was eight. Then somehow, I got talked into performing for the *fiafia*, and I haven't performed in years, and I never sing in public either—only when I'm moved. I feel very bizarre emotionally because, on the one hand, I feel very open with the Samoans and Fijians, and less open with my group.

The white people expect me to behave a certain way about my father, and the Samoans don't, they just want to know about him. I am finally feeling what I want to, when I'm with my Samoan *aiga*.

Dear Friend,

There are no witnesses that her body allows to penetrate the difference between the worlds in her speech and the word she believes.

She is floating now, letting the current knead her gently like bread. The colours of the rainbows and the rest of the morning soak and flavour her skin with their stories. It is becoming difficult for her to remember the people she loves because she is trying to love the whole world.

Before she left for the beach this morning, her home stay sister, Ava, clutched her hot pink pen in her right hand, and drew on her left one, a crude flower, the shade of rose barely showing up on her dark skin. She noticed how Ava savoured the feeling of the ink attaching itself to her person, and the knowledge came to her that Ava must not get to taste colour like that often. She thought the point of Ava drawing on her body was to possess the novelty.

She also smiles and thinks, *well, Ava is ten and likes to touch my legs.*

Even my body's undulations in sleep have a Samoan accent.

Bell is ringing- is it time to

Pray or open?

My eyes are warm-

My stomach is warm-

The fog and the stars are warm fingers stroked intimately down the back of my spine.

Open-open up! My hips

Sway the motions of waves

Ebb and flow my thighs

Side to other side *i le fale*.

It's 5am and I am the second breath inhaled-

The first exhilaration belongs to the ribs and yellow eyes of dogs.

Open-open up! My mouth

Softened the way my feet pound the floor *i le fale*.

My arms seek and pull, seek and pull

The air like harp strings or like *aitu* pulling hair.

It's a dance, a *siva* Samoa

Green hills hide rainbows

My smile hides the rising sun.

Dear Friend,

So, I decided to give the gifts in on rare and quiet moment, on Saturday afternoon after I had taken the girls swimming. My Samoan mother had insisted I take a shower and have a nap after, and I could see that she was tired from being out in the heat, so I told her that I would only rest if she rested too. She agreed to this-and set herself up on the bench near my bed, the girls were on my left, playing with my hand dangling over the edge of my sheets.

My Samoan mother and I started asking each other questions, me in Samoan, her speaking in English, about what we liked and I found the Samoan coming to me easily because the hard edge of personality was gone in this peaceful moment with the afternoon sun glowing beyond the curtains. ...She wrote down her address and birthdays of all her children for me and then I felt the subtle change in the weather, so I got up, unzipped my bag and brought out my plastic bag of gifts to where my Samoan mother's leis were, (she had been working on earlier) and we sat down facing each other and I said my speech and she looked at me that she would never forget me. That's when my tears started because I believed her.

I was swimming in between the blue eyes of the ocean when I met a goddess who asked me, "What do you love?"

I replied, "I love the trees, I love the salt on your skin, I love the taste in the air before sun showers, I love the feel of a hungry kitten's tongue licking my fingers, I love the heat of fish and chips, I love the distance between my head and heart and hips when I dance in clubs half-naked sweating fear and alcohol, I love colour and sand and loneliness."

The goddess laughed and her breasts heaved with light and vapour in the sea. She dipped her face and hair in the water and grinned as the fish caught in her teeth. She lifted her head and asked, "When do you love?"

"I love in moments of indecision, I love when I am afraid to lose, I love when no one else can or will, I love after death, I love during pain, I love because I can and I love because I don't want to let go- I don't know how to stop."

The goddess laughed, throwing back her glorious throat, her sound wide in her mouth, her arms raised, her palms turned and open, every inch of her voice caressed me. She asked, "Why?"

"I love because I do not want to be forgotten."

She pulled me under the waves then. We swam and tunnelled in and out of the ebb and flow, beneath sight and beyond shadow. Our bodies dove into time and delved into memory. Her form shifted into that of a whale and she swallowed me, and carried me in her belly for a century. She taught me the songs of change and I lived as a dolphin for awhile. I had sex for pleasure and I learned to joke with tourists about tourists.

Next, I changed into a tree, my limbs hardened and drooped, my roots anchored me to earth and seeds and worms. My branches reached for water and I was frozen and aging when she came for me at last.

I smelled the brine of her womb and the foam of her vagina. She was carrying the husk I had left behind.

She laid my emptiness among my leaves, cupped her hands and drew from the sky a thunderstorm. She asked, "How do you love?"

I said, "I don't know."

She asked me again, "How do you love?" as the water splashed the bark from my soul.

I screamed, "I don't know!"

She said, "Does it really matter how you love so long as you know what, when and why? The mystery of how one loves lies within the potential of the human spirit."

Her words began to drown me. I felt my thirst return as the stiffness abandoned my spine to my emerging flesh. "You are being reborn. This is how everything loves, this is how a goddess loves, this is how: through death and rebirth!"

"I am breaking!" I cried in anguish, free at last, "I am open!"

"Then I will enter you as you entered me so long ago," the goddess replied. Her form merged with mine, her ego seeped into the new-born softness of my skin. Her wisdom tattooed stories at the base of my spine.

I slept. I dreamed dreams made up of myths and black pearls.

Dear Friend,

Ifoga, being such an important cornerstone of Samoan culture, has had an incredible impact on the legal system in Samoa as well as American Samoa. An *ifoga* can bring both families together in the worst of times for a chance at forgiveness, as well as being a different type of legally recognised justice.

Dear Friend,

I'm really trying to figure out what *ifoga* means, it's really bothering me that I something in my heart has already connected with it, but my head hasn't.

A Catholic priest I talked to at the cathedral in town remarked, "there has been a marriage of Christian and Samoan culture." The Catholic Church has incorporated many Samoan aspects into its liturgical ceremonies in Samoa. In the "ritual of purification," the Samoan Catholic church has incorporated "*ifoga*" in the sense that the Samoan Catholics choose to consider Christ's sacrifice on the cross an "ultimate *ifoga*."

Ifoga have been included in special Catholic ceremonies in Samoa, such as ceremonies when a woman dedicates herself to God, or when deacons become ordained priests. During these special church services, a Cardinal or Archbishop is present as well as family from those being ordained.⁴⁶ At the beginning of the service, the parents cover the

⁴⁶ In the dedication ceremony, the woman prostrates herself before God and does an *ifoga* before the church in the dedication ceremony.

deacons with *ietoga* fine mats, then a special traditional hymn is sung in Samoan. The words of the English translation of the hymn are

My lord my God,
I've done wrong.
I've broken your covenant.
I cry I need you.
Please love and forgive me.

Lord Jesus love me.
You alone can save.
Your death has saved me.
Love and accept this *ifoga*.

My God.
My Father.
My Savior.
Forgive me.

Afterwards, a prayer is said and then the representative uncovers the deacons, and sprinkles holy water. This action symbolises the moment where reconciliation with God happens.

“This *ifoga* asks for forgiveness- but it's really about peace. The Samoan cultural way of peace.”

Dear Friend,

I was able to interview a woman whose family was both the receiver and the participant in an *ifoga* on behalf of her mother who was killed in 2006, by her father when he was drinking.

This woman, who now lives with her brothers, children and husband, as well as with her father who did not do more than a few days in jail because of the *ifoga*, was surprisingly open about her circumstance as she witnessed the crime taking place against her own mother. This woman loves her father, and when asked if the ritual of *ifoga* helped her come to terms with what happened, agreed. The *ifoga* was a key factor in resolving the issue between her father and her mother's family as well as within the village itself.

It was difficult, even with the help of the translator, for the woman to understand what I was asking, and for me to understand how she was answering, because both of us come from incredibly strong cultures that have their own definitions and interpretations for certain circumstances and words, but still, I feel that we were able to connect during our conversation and legitimately share our personal histories.

One of the last questions I asked the woman was if at any point she felt helpless, and she replied, "I never felt helpless because my friends helped me." If you're always a part of something, it's hard to feel alone.

When I encountered a family/community that had recently gone through an *ifoga*, I was immediately wished my father had been able to have something like that done for his

crime. I think I should call it a mistake now though, because even though what he did was terrible, I will not allow it to define my memory of him.

At the conclusion of the conversation, I told this woman of my own father's imprisonment and death in April 2007, and my feelings regarding both, telling her that her story of *ifoga* gave me hope for the situation with my family to heal.

While this woman has a good relationship with her father, though he is often away working in Apia, one of her brothers still has not reconciled with his father, and now lives in his mother's village. All involved respect the *ifoga* that took place and continue to participate in family and village activities.

Ifoga is a ritual of forgiveness undertaken by Samoans when a crime has been committed, and is one of the more unique healing practices found in Oceania. "*Ifoga*" is made up of two words, "*ifo*," which means to bow down or to lower; it's a sign that asks for forgiveness. "*Ga*" makes "*ifo*" a noun/object. *Ifoga* has no direct English translation but the words that make up the meaning are: forgiveness, family, responsibility and ceremonial apology. *Ifoga* is a complex ritual in and is used when a serious offense, including murder, is committed in Samoa and sometimes overseas in New Zealand or America, where Samoan presence is strong.

After the offense occurs, the wrongdoer goes to his *aiga* or family and describes the severity of what he has done (in great detail); or the family is informed in another way.

Once family members realise one of their members has been responsible for a death or injury, the *matai* or chiefs meet to discuss what is to be done. If the family plans an *ifoga* they send a representative to the victim's family to determine if it would be appropriate. A day is agreed upon, and special mats are prepared.

The *matai* supported by family members goes to the victim's family *fale* and sits outside with the special mat covering their whole body from head to toe, and endures insults, threats of violence, actual violence and grief as well as the Samoan heat while waiting for forgiveness. (His expression of remorse is one of absolute humility toward the offended family, stripping their souls down to the marrow of their sorrow) and implicitly the sorrow and shame are shared by all.

The *ifoga* concludes when the victim's family is ready to accept. The *matai* are invited into the *fale*, and all are given food, water and shelter from the sun. A type of celebration occurs. The offended family reaches out to the family of the wrongdoer in an expression of forgiveness. Sometimes a ceremonial gift of fine of money or goods is presented from the wrongdoer and his/her family.⁴⁷ After the *ifoga*, the issue is ended in the village setting and the forgiven wrongdoer gradually assumes his role in the village without further judgment.

⁴⁷ This is up to the wrongdoers family and not dictated by anyone else.

Point of View: Mine

Location: New Zealand, at graduate school, remembering Samoa

Time: 2009

Mood: Peaceful

She is not a secret. She is more than a singularity, yet without everyone, friends, family, community and she cannot be framed by the epic of her existence. When she steps off the plane onto the islands, she realises that she will no longer be able to bask in the luxury of being lonely, because she is not alone. She is layered with the water and wood of stories. Her arms span rivers, and her legs straddle branches; nothing is linear about her because her hair is curly. Her actions do not fit into neat rows of cause and effects, and her consequences grow roots like anchors and tethers. Her life that is, can be, on certain days, lived deliciously backwards in time to the point where the texture of her skin is indistinguishable from that of freshly turned soil.

In all my time spent in a Westernised university, I was never once respected and acknowledged for the rich personal history with which I had grown up.. Only the pieces of me, which were relevant to my identity as a racial minority, were counted in the summation of my identity. Though partially my fault, should not my elders have taught me to value my whole character? I experienced the same exclusion in a Native American tribal college to some degree, my white-American identity was discounted and banished to the land of presumed privilege, and that part of my being, with all its

stories was somehow less valid. In an ever-globalising society, how can it be the morally correct action to make when no one is left uninfluenced by technology, media, and their neighbour?

I went to Samoa on a study abroad trip, the third and last trip I took during my undergraduate career. Samoa was filled with trees. Trees, trees, trees. Trees on top of each other fighting for space, trees growing from trees, and tiny trees sprinkling the barren areas with their delight; Oceania had an emotional landscape.

After the death of my father, and the rape of my academic ambition, I felt that I hadn't ended my university time on a positive note, and I felt an academic dissatisfaction, along with being spiritually hollow. You could bang on the door of my soul, and be pierced by the cold surface and the shallow resonance.

Our ability to comprehend forgiveness, as we accept it or give it, is one of the most valuable attributes of human nature that enables us to transcend our immediate individuality and recognise and revitalise the fluidity of our relationships, within and without the ripples of our lives.

We all have forgiveness in our nature and this is what allows us to grow in and on and around each other, weaving our webs. Have I told you how hard it is to make a basket out of coconut leaves? For some, the feeling of forgiveness is comprised of compassion and guilt, and can develop into an expression of true caring in an unknown emotional

landscape. We can feel like strangers in what we perceive to be strange lands. Frightened of the newness, these reactions draw on unfamiliar nerves and we, who are unsure of our behaviour and what is appropriate, slip up because even though we may have the inherent cultural and mortal framework, we lack the institutional framework to initiate this kind of emotional ceremony when this ceremony, simply put, is the discovery and adventure of your story.

Forgiveness worldwide has its own subjective definitions, some with incredibly intimate meetings and meanings between souls; forgiveness is a journey between souls. For me, however, as an American, as a Black girl, as a Native American girl, as a White girl, and as a grieving girl, forgiveness demanded that I restrain my impulse to make judgments, both of myself and others. I didn't know anything! Even now, I am trying to let go of my expectations and my previous technical and logical information of people and situations to achieve a *tabula rasa* mind set. I recognised that this could have been dangerous: the cognisant act of placing my trust in my sense of self, spirit, and moral, and above all, the existence of a higher power and collective creative consciousness.

To refuse forgiveness or an apology is to become stagnant, unable to join in the progressive personality of global society. To do all of this, to accept the compassion you have to acknowledge the guilt and to acknowledge the guilt, you have to realise that you are human and therefore you are vulnerable because you have the ability to love yourself and others.

In Samoa, no one remembers an *ifoga* being rejected because that would make war between families imminent. Even in dangerous circumstances and duress, the importance and potency of *ifoga* always prevails. If you're always a part of something, it's hard to feel like you're alone.

One day, the woman made up of wood and water was walking along the ground of her favourite meadow, singing quietly to herself. Her song was about the smell of freshly washed hair, hanging herbs, and warm brown skin. She sang so beautifully that the sound of her voice echoed in the thoughts of the Sun. And then the Sun looked down on earth and through her caught a glimpse of what was his. The Sun came down to earth to claim her in all his fiery glory.

Hawaii. American Samoa. Samoa. Fiji. New Zealand, and then to Samoa again. These places of sand and water and unfamiliar seasons, these palimpsests of ground and soil sheltered me from my aching. I became part of the movement of the zephyrs and my womb was gently hollowed and scraped out by the waves and filled with life; I was giving breath to my own story. Again and again and again. Oceania was, for me, a combination, a balance, a fine measuring of land and sea; *Terra* and *Mare* juxtaposed, creating and destroying life and death perpetually.

'O lo'u igoa o Acacia, ma o lo'u tamā o Cochise. Sā oti i le aso 21 o Aperila i le tausaga 2007. 'E faigatā tele lona oti mo a'u. 'O isi taimi ou te lē fiafia i lou tamā auā sā fale puipui lou tamā. I love my father regardless.

There is not a breathed moment in my life when I have not been aware of my father and the reasons he was imprisoned for the whole of his life or of the guilt and shame I connected with him. Recently, I have felt burdened with the responsibility of somehow finding forgiveness for him because I know he died without his own forgiveness or mine.

As a child, my father and I were incredibly close. At the time of his death, I had only seen him twice since I was 14, the final time being when I was 19. During my Christmas holiday break, I attempted a visit, but due to prison politics, I was unable to see him without a lot of imposition. My guilt at my own exhaustion with my father's situation had only seemed to increase because I could do nothing to help. I almost let it overwhelm me, or maybe I let myself slip under the water with my sickness.

The sun pursued her with ferocity when he found that she was afraid of him and did not want to be a part of his life. So the woman began to run. Her moving limbs swayed in the furious and scorching air. Faster and faster; perpetually she ran on, heading towards the water from which she was born.

After his death, my father was cremated, and without consciously planning to, I brought a small portion of his ashes with me to Samoa because I expected Samoa to be beautiful and filled with sacred green. I wanted my father to live that with me.

To me, *ifoga* is a ritual healing for the soul. I was overtaken by the question of how to do it properly, and then I realised, the *ifoga* would ultimately be more truthful to my own

complex feelings if I included my own forgiveness of self and father in the ritual. This forgiveness was necessary to acknowledge and heal my personal history. So much of my frustration and energy went into actively disconnecting the emotions that flew between my father and my anger against my psyche.

People of the neighbouring island of Rotuma say “The land has eyes and teeth and knows the truth,” I knew I needed a reason to live. In Samoa, because the foliage is everywhere and raw and heroic and silent, even my dimmest thoughts are screams against the calm that has seeped into the vast and salty depths beneath.

"Daddy, help me!" she cried.

I wasn't exactly searching for a specific place to bring my dad's ashes, and yet one appeared. There's a village, Tufutafoe, by the sea on the semi-remote island of Savaii.

The western end of Savaii, according to the Samoans, is the last place where the sun sets and also the gateway to *Pulotu*, the Samoan after-world. This "western end," is close to the black rock outcrop where the sun sets, home to the two entrances of *Pulotu*. The two separate entrances are for the *matai* and the commoners; each said go to different locations in the Samoan Hades.

In Samoa, if you have seen a spark of red, blue or black fire, you have seen a soul. The souls wander the earth at night trying to communicate with the familiar living. Samoans also believe that after death when the soul has passed through one of the gates to the

underworld, or when the dead go into the sea, they can choose to either continue on into the sun, or come back into the world and live again. Leosia, the familiar Charon-like keeper of the underworld, guards the body of water that separates the two choices. I needed to bring my father to this place so he could choose.

The beached coasts in Falealupo and Tufutafoe are lined with the sharp and smooth crushed coral so blinding in brilliance that one's eyes (and head) are forced to look up and away from one's feet, out into the endless sea. The spirits of the dead pass through and between small rock and coral arches from the world of the living to the world of the dead.

At Falealupo, I changed into a pink *lavalava* (a Samoan cloth wrap) after bathing in the sea. I then took my dad's ashes, bunches of fresh frangipani, and a medicine bag of tobacco that a Mohican friend gave me about a year ago to throw into the Manhattan river, but for some reason I still had it. . I climbed over coral and sun-smoothed black lava rocks to the tip of an outcrop where there is a small break in the rock and a stream of salt water flows over pink and periwinkle coral. The rest of the outcrop juts out into the sea.

Her father's crystalline figure rose from the river, and his hands opened. He released a great wave of transparent gems, and the droplets flew like incoherent magnets, and stuck to her body. The woman made up of wood and water began to change. Her kindling dried and twisted in upon herself. Her deluge cracked and lessened. The hair on her

body hardened and branched, and her fear budded into thousands of lush filaments.

I stood somewhat firmly on the tip of the black lava rock, said a prayer and threw the frangipani in a wide arch over the outcrop; some fell into the sea. There was a jagged hole where the waves rush in with fierceness covered in velvet and I knew that was the place of choice. I threw the medicine bag in first, as the sea waves rose rapidly, tickled my ankles. I opened the container of my father's ashes, raised it above my head, and flung the ashes into the waves rushing into the hole. Crying, I flung the container. I don't know why, but I attempted to sing a lullaby. I stood, vision blurred and clear, hair curled and uncurled in the wind and salt, and then I turned and left.

The Sun, finally seeing the transformation he had caused bowed down before her father in regret. All was silent. Her father stared into the eyes of the Sun, concentrating, and then sank into the coldness of the river, taking the mistake with him.

I lost both of my shoes on the way back too but something in me released.

The Sun took the woman's breath and her surface and crafted a crown out of the laurel tree she had become. He then made the woman a promise. I will wear your exposure now, he said, just as you wore mine. I will take your helplessness into my own body and give up my name for yours because you are under my protection now and this bond can only be true if you are able to pardon me.

I had promised myself that in Savai'i, I would feel and speak and make a conscious effort to acknowledge my truthful and personal emotions concerning my father.

I made a good beginning at last; forgiveness for my father and me is now possible.

The pain is incorporated within me now, washed with salt and healing. I did not understand that pain is not something to leave behind; it's something to work through, before it slips through shaking fingers into the sea.

I wanted to stall and stagger out those seconds of awareness: A baby's naked flesh cradled in my arms, bumpy night driving between clouds and glimpses of unfamiliar constellations. A bag of fish and chips covered in mayonnaise clutched in one hand, the feeling of cloth –warmed bodies pressed all around me in the back of a dirty truck. Blue startled butterflies rushing out at me and the vibrancy of my reflection with purple flowers braided into my hair, speaking eyebrow language, and in sighs and tongue clicks. Sweat, so much sweat, heaps and heaps of sweat in the clubs, my body pressed into a different rhythm. And the sea, the sea, the sea; its entering of me, its seed and its salt, when I was naked that one morning, awake before the fishermen, when I felt the rainbows forming before I saw them.

For the first time, I experienced clear feelings and pockets of brilliance in memories connected with my father. Bleached coral, crushed coral and glittering water were seeping slowly into my painful memories. I realised I could physically and emotionally

forgive myself once I let myself go. No one else could forgive me and make these feelings change and wash away but myself. Feelings and all emotions extraordinary and precious, intimate and cultural, exposed and global, danced in and out of view.

If my Academic Director had not allowed me the freedom to move fluidly between my own history and the history of a culture that was not my own, I would not have been able to grasp the essential connection I shared through my humanity and the humanity of others. Respecting the lives of others, especially those that appear different is one of the most difficult processes one can open oneself up to. Beginning the journey of understanding another human being is sacred, and therefore the land that cradles this experience is also sacred. Samoa, the land, people, and practices helped me rediscover my strength and belief in something greater than myself. I had truly believed life was pointless, and death was meaningless until I was given the opportunity to lean otherwise.

I am an American who has lived, swam, eaten, cried, and prayed in the margins of Samoa. In the spaces between the lines of the words I write in my homeland, I am buoyed up by the waters of the oceans I have crossed. That ocean would have drowned me but brought out the stories of my life instead

The day when I leave for America is looming, and I'm afraid and excited for the changes that will develop in the land of my birth because I don't think most of the pain surrounding my relationship with my father is waiting for me there. The pain is in

washed with salt. I meant to leave it in America, but instead I brought it with me, only to have it slip through my fingers into the sea.

Albert Wendt wrote, in his article, "Towards a New Oceania."

Our dead are woven into our souls like the hypnotic music of bone flutes: we can never escape them. If we let them they can help illuminate us to ourselves and to one another. They can be the source of new found pride, self-respect, and wisdom. Conversely they can be the *aitu* that will continue to destroy us by blinding us to the beauty we are so capable of becoming as individuals, cultures, nations. We must try to exorcise these *aitu* both old and modern. If we can't do so, then at least we can try and recognize for what they are, admit to their fearful existence and, by doing so, learn to control and live honestly with them. We are all familiar with such *aitu*. (1984, p.71-85).

My father, in my life isn't the villain, he's an indefinable character I love, love to hate, and who lives and breathes complexities. He's the flawed almost-hero I pity for his inability to find the way out of self-hatred. He's the father I want to believe is so consumed with his own pain that he does not see mine. He's also the father I took on a pilgrimage, a plane, a boat, a wooden bus, on bloody feet cut by coral and welling eyes to Samoa. He will always be the father I hope chooses to come back to me.

'E muamua lava ona 'ou si'i le vi'iga ma le fa'afetai i le Atua. Sāmoa fa'afetai mo le taliaina o efuefu o le tino maliu o si 'ou tamā ua lafoina i ogāsami o Sāmoa. 'O le agaga fiafia ua maua lona filēmū i le filēmū o Sāmoa. 'O le fa'amoemoe 'ou te toe foi' i lou atunu'u o Amerika ma le agaga maualuga e toe asiasi i Sāmoa i se aso o i luma. Alofa ma soifua.

Point of View: Mine

Location: Music and Water

Time: All the time sunrises in Oceania

Mood: How you feel when you're coming home after a long journey; a vast interwoven complexity of emotions ranging from elation to fear to self-respect

Once upon a time, there was a girl,

who had to die in order to love.

Love told the girl to drown--

"You won't believe in me," Love said, "Unless you feel me."

"I am not greedy, I am not jealous, I am not juvenile. I am more than one person's definition. I am unconditional. And I want you to feel me, then share me."

Even though she was afraid, the girl realised that she could not just break things and leave them broken and alone, even if she had only broken herself.

People's fragments remain, exposed to light and dark, inviting, intriguing, and interweaving with others' lives. Creating pictures and moments, strengthening the bonds of our shared humanity.

Mosaics are the truest expressions of our feelings. A union is a mosaic that possesses the possibility of movement and transformation.

The girl went down to the river,
golden coins on golden tongue in golden mouth.

Golden strands of hair shimmering in light,
payment for the ferryman to seal death and make it whole. Make it real.

As the girl was slipping beneath the water, she cried out, "I don't want to leave myself, I don't want to lose myself, but I want the opportunity to know you!"

When the girl was brought to the guardians of death and loneliness,
they rejected her and gave her back her life saying, "You are overcome."

So, as the butterfly emerges from its chrysalis, Psyche returned from the underworld, and the girl escaped from Isolation, with the wind, and danced.

Reborn at last, the girl knew the Truth. The girl's death was a symbol for the girl's change. And the girl's fear was only the fear of loss and that had made the girl dread commitment to self and to another.

The girl, pondering this realisation, turned to Love, and said, "I promise you I will try to remember the hope of this moment."

Love laughed gently, "You see," said Love, "You can feel me now because you let go of your fear and changed."

9.5 Chapter 9-10 Transition Notes

Since 2007, I have held this story deep within myself. My journey of discovery, simultaneously of self and of another culture sparked the beginning of my graduate studies in Oceania. This story has had many incarnations in my journals, certain academic papers and oral retellings to friends but it wasn't until my return to Samoa in 2011 that I felt I could finish it.

Living in Polynesia for almost four months in 2007 changed my life, turning me inwards and then yanking me outside my body. Living in Polynesia forced me to immerse myself in the Indigenous culture, embrace the changes of my lifestyle, and sparked a need within me to give something positive back to the cultures that taught me the worth of family, spirituality and heritage. Living in Polynesia changed my life because I lived and studied between two contrasting lifestyles, two physical environments, and a social-emotional context shared simultaneously by western and indigenous identities.

Elements such as socio-economic differences, village life, and the sharing of personal narratives fostered, nurtured and provoked my transformation. Witnessing the divides and intersections between the Westerners and Indigenous people in a country so proud of its Indigenous heritage and traditional lifestyles in a developing culture and being a small contributor to its growth as a student instilled a unique sense of responsibility. This significant time of my 20-something year-old self-centeredness forced me, upon my return to the States as a teacher and mentor, to begin otherwise validating my existence. I can say with utmost candour that back in 2007 when I boarded the plane at Faleolo

airport I had no plans to ever return to Samoa, let alone as the academic coordinator for the woman who headed the very program that transformed me so entirely.

The story of the family in, “Souls of an Island” is a remade with fragments of my own story with my father. I wanted to pay homage to what the land and people of Samoa did for us both whilst expressing the reality of a life connected to pain and tragedy early on. “Unblocking our stories is one of the many ways of exposing, exploring, and deconstructing the various ideological colonisations of the mind. Writing and storytelling are an integral part of ‘decolonising the mind.’” (Marsh, 1999, p.170). Creative expression through poetry or fiction can become a lifeline for multicultural and multiracial youth trying to navigate growing up in a dominant system that may not recognise the amalgamation of these identities. I wrote “Souls of an Island” almost four years after having gone to Samoa with my father’s ashes. When I returned to Savaii, I felt an immense sense of familiarity, like someone or something was welcoming me to a home that could almost be mine. Then I heard dolphins singing with my father’s voice. They all sounded happy.

Chapter 10

Constitutive graphonomy therefore contends that the writer and reader functions are as 'present' to each other in the acts of writing and reading as conversants are in conversation. That the writer tries to make meanings out of his or her selection of words implies the presence of the reader function. In other words, when we write, we often alternate functions. As a writer, one can also function as a reader by looking at one's own written text and asking, "Now, how does this read?" This is in fact, a new ontological event because as reader, one then views the written text within its own discursive site to ascertain what meanings are possible or disclosed there. The writing itself also frees language from the contingent situation of production that is more obvious in spoken language use. Meaning is therefore established at this discursive site without the constraints of a standard or another controlling force or the cultural baggage or experience which may seem necessary for some to construct meaning. --Emma Kruse Va'ai,

Chapter 10 begins with section 10.1, "Conclusion" that gives some closing remarks on the dissertation. 10.2. "Story Development" is a brief exploration of the development of the short story in the next section. Section 10.2.1, "Come Find Me" is a short story that explores the experience of an MPCR student at an international conference. I felt it was important to include this story in Chapter 10 as it describes some issues that these types of students may have from within a department, pedagogy or cohort that is not cognisant of the types of ideological stereotypes they associate with mixed-race, multi-cultural, or multi-perspective identities. Section 10.3, provides conclusive thoughts on Chapter 10 and provides suggestions for further research. Section 10.3.1 introduces some possible research proposals for interested scholars and section. 10.4 discusses the current efforts and partnerships I am making towards expanding my study and support of culturally responsive education practices and incorporating experiential education techniques in multi-perspective, multicultural classrooms. Section 10.5 and 10.5.1 provide an epilogue to this dissertation.

10.1 Conclusion

In a letter written to me by a former student, she reflects,

Initially, the bicultural environment of the SIT program seemed daunting. My experience with SIT Samoa was the first time I lived in a place where I did not speak the local language fluently. I had lived abroad internationally, but in Latin America, where my native Spanish helped provide a seamless transition. Living in Samoa, however, provided the new experience and challenge of not being able to verbally communicate and I found myself frustrated. As time went on, my Samoan improved and I was able to form complete sentences and engage in basic dialogue. What had initially seemed daunting was becoming familiar and the feelings of frustration became feelings of accomplishment as my understanding improved and I conversed with the locals. By this point, I had lived in Samoa for about a month when I had my epiphany: I finally understood what it felt like to be helpless and at a loss for words, feelings that my immigrant parents experience every day as non-English speakers in America. I had always taken for granted my ability to effectively communicate until I was placed in a completely foreign environment. In retrospect, I am grateful for the experiences I had and the lesson I learned because they made me truly aware of the importance of language in forming relationships and engaging in genuine cultural immersion. (Personal communication, December 2012).

The language of race and culture gives Western and Indigenous students a celebratory notion of how they should “perform” in a classroom without laying the groundwork for deep connections and empathetic narratives. Western and Indigenous students are automatically set up to classify themselves into culturally autonomous groups without giving regard to the inherent ways of learning they could connect with.

In his work, Thich Nhat Hanh always speaks of the teacher as a healer. Like Freire, his approach to knowledge called on students to be active participants, to link awareness with practice. Whereas Freire was primarily concerned with the mind, Thich Nhat Hanh offered a way of thinking about pedagogy which emphasized wholeness, a union of mind, body and spirit. His focus on a holistic approach to learning and spiritual practice enabled me to overcome years of socialization that had taught me to believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded another as “whole” human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world. (Hooks, 1994, p. 15).

Through participatory research methods, and interdisciplinary evaluative methods I have produced a body of writing that is an intuitive and detail-oriented evaluation of my original research aims.

I have sought to discover if culturally bound learning pedagogies exist, and if they can they be used and shared successfully by multicultural classrooms. I have found that culture-specific epistemologies, culturally bound pedagogies are present in Samoa, and are represented wonderfully through the efforts of Rotaract Samoa, the SIT program and especially through the combined efforts of the Western and Indigenous peoples working on the island.

I have sought to discover if Western and Indigenous students and teachers can speak to each other from a discursive position and found that through the support of the fluid experiential pedagogy of SIT Samoa this multi-perspective, multicultural group communicate their learning experiences well.

I have sought to discover if relationships between Indigenous and Western identities be cultivated through pedagogy and literature, and found through my study of Samoan authors, SIT literary classroom materials and SIT facilitated lectures and peer-lead, intercultural discussions that there are even deeper cross-cultural connections being made and remembered.

I have sought to discover if teachers/academic pedagogies use cultural and racial binaries as a starting point to create dialogue between Western and Indigenous identities and

found that SIT does not, and instead uses cross-cultural experience and immersion to prevent these binaries from taking root. Also, I have found that even though there is an implicit identification/acknowledgement of cultural and racial biases, due to the on-going, hands-on experiential aspect of SIT, many students learn how to function outside these binaries with cultural sensitivity and maturity.

I have sought to discover if creative explorations of identity can be used as primary resources to synthesise Western and Indigenous theories and practices, and believe I have proved through usage of interweaving creative writing and personal stories that narrative and story offer a unique learning vantage point.

I have sought to discover if classrooms can be organised and structured so that students learn effectively as human beings rather than being separated from each other in terms of race and culture, and have shown through the combination of participant observation, interdisciplinary research and interpretation, student testimonials and previous personal experience as an SIT student and teacher that classrooms can and must do this.

I have sought to discover if a discourse on multiculturalism is possible, and I believe I have shown through via my experience as a student, teacher and researcher, and via this dissertation that a discourse on multiculturalism is possible and has become increasingly necessary due to the changes of demographics in “mainstream” society. As a person with both western and indigenous heritages, I fell like I have been on a quest, searching for a

methodologies, pedagogies and epistemologies that encompass the different traditional and developing ways of learning present in both types of cultures.

As an undergraduate, I was able to study and live in Samoa for four months, with the School of International Training's program that explored the evolution of different elements of Pacific Island cultures, namely those of Samoa, American Samoa, Fiji and Hawaii using a combination of western and indigenous learning techniques, specifically the indigenous learning techniques of oral tradition, and the Western Samoan-specific tradition of learning through observation.

My research questions were centered on issues of culture and pedagogy, and how to interweave the two and I have addressed them in an integrated way in the chapters of my dissertation. Chapters 3-5 identified aspects of experiential education that can be useful in multicultural settings with both Western and Indigenous university students. Chapters, 5-8 examined the evolution of communication between students of various cultures and determined how communication can be encouraged most effectively. Chapters 8-10 identified secondary benefits of experiential education and explored the inclusive learning techniques that benefit and empower Western and Indigenous students in multicultural classrooms.

I believe I have added an original account of interdisciplinary research as well as an original methodological journey to the fields of education and anthropology. I have created a term, "multi-perspective, culturally-responsive (MPCR)," in order to delve into emerging student identities from the Millennial generation. I have successfully created a

dissertation that uses original stories and storied perspectives in order to better illustrate the journey of MPCR students. In sum, I have contributed an original thematic argument on behalf of a particular generation of people with multicultural backgrounds, who find that because of their multicultural and multi-ethnic identities, going to school where they are only taught through the usual conventions doesn't fully encompass their personalities. Millennial students don't engage or learn well in typical Westernised classroom setup and flourish best within experiential education programmes. Ultimately, I have discovered that Millennial students need an eclectic learning pedagogy. If mainstream education programming follows in the example of SIT Samoa, and rigorously implements multi-perspective, culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, Millennial students will be better prepared to function in society.

The educator must understand their Millennial generation audience. By understanding the Millennial student and how they learn, the educator will be more successful in creating a learning centered environment.

The educator's role has evolved from not only being the content expert, but also a developer of life-long learning. The ability of this generation also adds to the shift in teaching strategies. Creative content delivery must be integrated in order to keep the students engaged and challenged both in and out of the classroom. The Millennial generation is no longer the type of student our educational system was designed to teach. (Barkely, 2005, 44-46). The new student constructs their knowledge. (Monaco & Martin, 2007, p.46)

10.2 Story Development

“Come Find Me” is a piece that I wrote after participating in my first academic conference in Samoa. Within the SIT setting, I had been both cast and self-cast as an Indigenous culture representative and purveyor. At this conference, however, I found

myself both cast and self-cast as an observer of Indigenous culture. My racial-minority and Indigenous cultural status was mixed with an American Caucasian heritage that alienated and set me apart from my Indigeneity. Many people assumed I had no experience or deep knowledge of my Indigenous heritage or alternative cultural academic theories because I had been brought up in a Western society and attended “Westernising education factories.”

Admittedly, I had felt this type of alienation before, as many bi-racial or multi-racial people are alienated in the context of homogenous schools/classrooms, settings, and work places. Conversations with and observation of my peers, students and elders, verified that people often want to know, “what you are” or “where you come from.” If your answer comes from many different backgrounds or places, your social standing is either ignored, because it’s too difficult or takes time to process, or doesn’t fit into the normal societal context. Nevertheless, when I am in an academic community I always expect to feel accepted or more welcomed, or even appreciated for my multi-experiential-perspective background. I never expect the alienation or the upfront questions about my races or cultures, which on the other hand, I do appreciate because personally, I’d rather be asked than exoticised or gossiped about. Nevertheless, alienation can also be channelled into some fabulous nights of furious writing, moments of academic empathy for those who’ve come before and are trying to come forth and also moments of humility in the realisation that you have so much more to learn about life in general, especially the lives of others around your age, in your field still operating within the confines of traditional racial binaries.

Can the acknowledgement of these racial binaries, schools of thought and pedagogy be used with positive outcomes anymore? It's a question I continue to be asked and ask others. This piece is ultimately about the interaction of Westernised-Indigenous identities.

10.2.1 Come Find Me

Getting out the door:

“But these people are fading from me, so I'll darken my skin with the lines from the map drawn by your soul... come find me, come find me.” Lyrics from a song manifest in her dream, right behind her eyes as she wakes. Today, she's going to shower, undo the braid in her hair from last night, wash off the cover up from underneath her eyes and the mascara, reapply, smile at her reflection in the tarnished mirror and walk out her front door without screaming at the chickens in her front yard.

She's glamorous. From Boston, Massachusetts, USA. And she's in Samoa, on a study abroad trip. That's Western Samoa, not American Samoa. American Samoa has cable and convenience stores with large bags of white rice that cost five dollars instead of \$50 *Tala*. She's here though, she's willingly here and she's dark enough to be mistaken for a Samoan. She's not quite Samoan enough though. Never will be, and doesn't want to give up one minority status for another one in a developing country. She's not exactly experiencing pride in being an American, rather, she's experiencing a unique brand of abridged and hi-jacked nationalism. She's been here for about a year, living in the village of *Alafua* with someone else's chickens in her front yard. She's got a one-eyed dog too,

Mata'ivi she calls him, "one-eye." Her dearest wish is to be a world-renowned author of fantasy and fiction.

"People are fading from me...Darken my skin... Soul," the words linger on in her head... and when she sings them aloud she sounds like a three year old warbling on to her mother about how the colour pink plus the colour yellow equal sunshine. She's got to get out of the house soon. She still has to print out her notes and make it across town to the university where the conference is taking place. She begged and pleaded with her supervisors for them to let her take part, so why is it that it's all she can do to not jump back in bed and pull the covers over her eyes and listen to the sighs and moans from alternated episodes of *True Blood* and *Gossip Girl*?

They said. They said that there would come a time when her loneliness outweighed her curiosity. Okay, she gets this, really does, but they didn't bother to say that she would lose her virginity to a married rugby player from Australia and then fall in love with his Samoan coach. Why is rugby everywhere in the Pacific and why do men cry when they break their ribs and not when their secret girlfriend has to have an illegal abortion in Fiji? "People are fading.... My soul.... People are fading my soul.... I'll darken my skin." She's outside, walking towards the main road in the almost 80 degree 8am, already, morning. She's ready for this presentation. Her notes are neat, the printer works, and what she has to say isn't original, but the way she's going to say it could almost be inspired. She feels like a hypocrite though. Her research, and subsequently her

presentation are centred on the exploration of bonds between brown and white people in developing education systems and societies.

She's a hypocrite because she doesn't believe in creating these bonds like she used to. And no, it's not because in the past two months she's slept with a white man and a brown man with the same results. It's because she's brown and white, lived in brown and white societies and still hasn't ever felt at home in either one. Either identity. Either place. Though she does admit no places in the world are filled with only brown or only white people.... It's the issue surrounding the control and dissemination of both racial cultures and ethnic cultures; who owns whom, what, where, and when. Who owns history and identity, this argument is begrudgingly shared by both brown and white people in brown and white dominated societies, so why can't she, a brown and white girl, seem to fit in anywhere when all people seem to be talking about is how brown people can fit into white things and white people can look less stupid fitting into brown things?

At the conference, after lunch, while she's trying to get to the next presentation:

"After I got Chlamydia, I realised I should be sleeping with white women," The Graduate says to her.

"Um, what?" Her voice, the student's voice comes out more harshly than intended.

"Really, we're going to talk about this at an international conference?"

"Well, you're the one referencing the racial binary between black and white pedagogy. You're obviously not sleeping with a white man because they don't care about that shit. I

just chose to reference sex too to get your attention. You've been avoiding me since I asked you those questions after your presentation. Don't you know that your postulations are going to set indigenous people back ten years?"

"What the fuck, back ten years to what? And where the fuck are you getting a racial binary out of the fact that my research is encouraging educators to deliberately discuss and facilitate relationships between western and indigenous peoples?"

"You don't get it do you, this binary- which you do refer to in the way you set up indigenous and western identities in education and identity sketches, the charts and definitions that you come up with- the fact that you separate the two is teaching white students, and subsequently the brown ones that the binaries do exist and they should continue to support them in the way they learn and perform their knowledge of the world."

She stands there in disbelief, looks at The Graduate from Hawaii, and tears come to her eyes. She blinks, and The Graduate either pretends not to see them, or actually doesn't. She swallows the bile in her throat, and the first thing that comes out of her mouth is, "What are you? Are you full Samoan?"

The Graduate answers, "I'm Samoan, German and a bunch of other stuff that I don't like to refer to because it's not relevant."

Not relevant, what the fuck does that even mean? She goes on to say, “The way that I’m writing my dissertation doesn’t just deal with these binaries that I’m apparently using as a lens for my research and writing. I’m also using poetry that combines different racial voices to speak about the way their identities are transforming.”

“Well that’s a relief. That’s okay then,” The Graduate says, “But don’t feel like you have to justify yourself to me.”

“I’m late to the next paper. I just want to say thank you for your commentary and taking the time to talk to me. Good luck with everything,” Wow, she thinks as she walks away, she sounds so fucking polite, like a robot, a polite fucking robot. And she worries that The Graduate is right, and she is setting indigenous people back 1,000 years by using or referencing the language, theory and practices of racial binaries in education systems. But what else can she do? It’s not as if indigenous theory exists really, it would be quite a paradoxical existence to say the least... and oral tradition, how can she use and incorporate and ultimately destroy a practice that is not written down and changes all the time? What does this uppity brown girl Graduate with a degree actually want her to say? Which part of her identity should she perform to get this audience to listen, because, oh no, being accepted is a whole other performance she has to rehearse and change her accent for. Because that damn song was stuck in her head, she forgot to pack an emergency spare costume and the outfit she’s wearing right now clearly isn’t eliciting positive responses.

Meeting her cohort:

Her cohort is charmingly rag-tag but they don't seem to like her and they tell her it has something to do with her being pretty. So she's too pretty to keep a man faithful and also too pretty to make friends with attractive smart people?

“So I'll darken my skin with the lines from the map drawn by your soul... come find me, come find me. Come find me in the chain-pain-stains etched on the walls of your heart.”

Ugh, this song is still stuck in her head, and it looks so inappropriate right now to be talking to herself. Her face is too youthful to look lost in any deep thought.

Anyway, her cohort is the only group of people that do not laugh during a health paper on Samoan traditional midwifery practices presented in *pese and siva*, and laugh nervously after a food-poisoned woman is carried from the lecture hall.

During a break, she whispers to her new acquaintance from another school that she's excited to see all these brown people with degrees being respected by white people with millions-dollar grants. Their laughter isn't mean; it's just surprising that both she and her seatmate aren't bitter. They're hopeful, because, well, isn't this the point of bringing together elders, scholars and students from around the world to discuss issues surrounding indigenous peoples' development?

Why is it so difficult for her to make real friends at this thing though? She should have worn a longer dress and a bra that didn't enhance her Cleavage, Cleavage with a capital "C," pronounced with an obnoxious French accent.

Another Graduate comes up to her:

"That thing that you said about having to deal with guilt from leaving your own people behind and in such dire straits to seek a higher education really affected me. I started to cry."

She answers with, "Of course I feel guilty standing up in front of a bunch of people with my education discussing kids that have no chance at one and knowing with a certainty sinking in the bottom of my soul that if I was teaching these kids on my Reservation that I would be making a difference in at least one person's life right now. But I chose to believe in the future, I chose the future over my past, and I hope that the future allows me to change more than one person's life because the whole point of abandoning the teachings of my ancestors is to attain the power to change the way things are done, and the types of things done to my people. In reality though, I think all I'll have is a paper that says I am qualified to change pedagogy."

The other graduate says, "That's what I believe in too and why I do what I do and why I can't live with my family anymore. That's the hope I cling to more than I cling to God sometimes- though don't tell my *fai-feau* I said that."

“Come find me...etched on the walls of your heart. Beneath ... fest’ring colours, fest’ring tears in blah blah blah.... you-you-you. Come find me where I...forget you.”

What the fuck is this song actually about? She doesn’t think it’s just about a break up. Maybe it’s about a breaking and opening of identity, of her identity, as an American, as a brown girl, as a woman, as a racial minority in a developing country with an indigenous minority trying to find her way? And who is she exactly- who is she supposed to be, how should she act?

Conference dinner:

She’s early to the conference dinner, and so she doesn’t miss the sight of The Graduate arriving with a white man. The Graduate is wearing a long, red and white *puletasi*, and both The Graduate and her male companion have rings on their fingers in strategic I’m married to “The Institution” obvious places. People. People are full of self-righteous shit, she thinks furiously, and self-righteously.

Home again:

She gets home. It’s dark. It’s after ten. She’s been at the conference since just after eight in the morning. All day. She’s eaten fancy quiches and *pisupo* and *taro*, bad decision for her stomach, she’d drunk way too little while her cohort drank way too much, also, in its own way a bad decision. The song is still stuck in her head:

But these people are fading from me, so I'll darken my skin with the lines from the map drawn by your soul... come find me, come find me. Come find me in the chain-pain-stains etched on the walls of your heart. Beneath the rotting words, fest'ring colors, fest'ring tears in my love letters. Love letters to you. Love letters to you-you-you. Come find me where I choose to lay you down, lay you down in my bed to forget you.

Who are these people, who are these people that are fading, is it her family, her actual people, her historically traumatised people? Oh well she sighs, and feeds her chickens and her one-eyed dog papaya skins. The song rages on in her head, and she's tempted to cry. Instead, she sings it out loud at the top of her lungs. Mata'ivi looks up, sniffs and snuffles in her direction and then goes back to tearing at the papaya.

She goes inside her house, closes the door, takes off all her clothes, takes a cold shower- all her senses, even her emotional ones are bombarded by the cold water. And then, she laughs because, for once, there is no need to analyse how she feels right now. She laughs again because she's not studying herself in her tarnished mirror. She gets into her now silent bed with her two coconut shell earrings and one eagle-feather earring still on; Mata'ivi settles his body underneath her window that cocoa wire has haphazardly been stapled over... a Samoan version of a security system. Works pretty well too until someone ruins it with wire-cutters. They both sleep through the night and the 3am rooster sex party taking place on the roof of her *fale*.

10.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The social agenda of education provides the avenue through which cultural diversity may be pursued in a concerted manner that provides adequate focus of cultural issues without marginalizing issues in diversity. (Koya, 2009, p. 5).

With more and more influential aspects of globalisation disseminating throughout the world, resulting in multicultural multi-identity marriages, and children, I felt that I needed to make recommendations for future study to explore the multitude of impacts on the Millennial general and developing MPCR identities.

Given social and economic growth in the global arena, diversity is becoming more apparent in Pacific nations and because of this, active facilitation of the diversity in education discussion needs to take place. The diversity of the Pacific region as a whole and within PICs respectively as well as the growing diverse needs of students attending Pacific schools indicate that diversity in education can no longer be viewed as a consequence of the cultural debate. Nor should it be seen as a competitor. (Koya, 2009, pp. 5-6).

What I found in my thesis resulted in future research directions. One of the main arguments I made in this dissertation is that education systems need to equip MPCR students for the world to come, and if that means modifying systems, epistemologies, and pedagogies then we need to do that. Advocates for globalisation could very well be in trouble because the existence of the Millennial generation proves that current “globalised” and universal templates for education are not functioning well.

Multicultural competencies are important for positive cross-cultural interaction. These competencies are needed for interaction in every sphere of human contact and are not restricted to classrooms and schools. These skills are important in the wider social community, in business communication, politics, and health care systems to name a few. Knowing how to engage in meaningful and acceptable

communication and general interaction is therefore becoming increasingly seen as a common skill or general knowledge. (Koya, 2009, p. 9).

Creating an education system to accommodate a paradigm that will prepare MPCR and non-MPCR students interact with this new world and expanding education system is paramount. Current educations working in MPCR classrooms need to actively invest and explore its “global” roots and not discount minority identities in favour of an over reaching “Western” one. In the third world, all students from the periphery also have complex identities that need to be addressed in cultural and education systems.

If ME [Multicultural Education] is developed in context and tailored to meet local and regional needs in line with global trends and standards, it could offer substantial benefits to the establishment of quality education reform in teacher education. It is inclusive education and provides the cultural emphasis that Pacific educators have been calling for. As far as inclusive education goes, ME is education for all. It actively promotes the skills, knowledge and values required for living in diverse communities as articulated by the Delors Report and emphasized in the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity. ME would enable teachers to facilitate a more meaningful teaching and learning process that caters for diverse students” learning needs and backgrounds. (Koya, 2009, p. 15).

MPCR students would benefit from further exploration of their multi-layered identities as well as an inquiry into the types of programs and programming that may best fit them. If the Millennial generation is responsible for producing these types of students, it can only be in the further interest of the Millennial generation to explore their education needs in the interests of the next generation they will produce. My research an MPCR student/teacher from the Millennial generation can inform these future studies by providing an example of an interdisciplinary and qualitative approach to a case study that explored this identity in Samoa. Hopefully others will realise the need to expand on this study.

I believe education systems have the power to equalise socio-economic situations and racial histories as well as to create balances within a student with a multicultural/multiracial identity. If educators do not aid discussion and creative exploration of these stereotypes then the students and Indigenous people might develop unhealthy ethno-centric assumptions that interfere in the building of equal academic relationships. It is the responsibility of education systems, education pedagogy, teachers and students right now to examine, and then break out of the box of what has been believed and done in the past.

10.3.1 Research Proposals

The Millennial generation in Samoa (or other societies/ Indigenous cultures with histories of colonisation): Is there one?

1. This study will look at youth attitudes towards Samoan culture, education, and overall effects of globalisation, especially technology, employment and career options:
2. The objectives of this study are to determine the factors contributing to identity of the new generation of students in Samoa, if there is a brain drain in Samoa, and if so, reasons why there is a brain drain and the implications for Samoan cultural practices. Another objective would be to discover if/how reverse migrations impact an emergence of ideas conducive of a Millennial generation.
3. Sources for this study could be UNDP, The Bureau of Statistics in Samoa, local NGOs and tertiary institutes in the Pacific.

The evolution of multicultural experiential education programming

1. This study will trace the evolution of experiential education and relate its evolution with the development of multicultural education.
2. The objectives of this study are to determine factors contributing to the recent increase in the popularity of experiential education programmes and community service-oriented, cultural immersion programmes as study abroad options. This study will focus on using a combination of statistical and qualitative evidence/student testimony to prove their popularity in a case study.
3. Sources for the study could be study abroad and international student offices, and departments in areas with large numbers of multi-perspective, culturally-responsive student bodies. Also, further study on different SIT programmes could also be considered as viable sources.

10.4 Current Efforts

In an effort to contribute some of what I learned to a younger generation of classmates, and to continue my exploration and support of MPCR students, I have partnered with a teacher manager in New Mexico, USA who works with teachers with Native American and Caucasian mixed classrooms. This teacher manager is from the organisation Teach for America. We are facilitating a series of online discussions that I will lead on ways to incorporate culturally responsive lesson plans and aspects of oral tradition and

storytelling into the classrooms with students from ages 11-18.⁴⁸ I also am working on writing an article that further explores experiential education programmes with the Academic Director of SIT Samoa as well as an article with two other peers, on the need for additional spaces and processes (particularly in education) that can encompass scholars who don't fit into the often racially defined and divisive "cultural minority" identity.

10.5 Epilogue

Without form,

We met and spoke with our spirits not with our tongues:

I've met you before.

I will be you again.

Our names were unwritten and the echoes of our songs were rising in enticing smoke curls from the fires of our ancestors and the voices of our children.

When we were born,

I had come from a land that had already taken from you what

You tried to take from me

And we learned the same dishonorable lesson on Her body.

⁴⁸ A proposed lesson and activity plan used as a basis for debate and constructive problem solving in bicultural settings can be found in the appendices.

What did you gain from taking from me what

I had been trained to take from you?

Did our shared experience create a centre or destroy meaning?

When we were young,

I loved you and you used me and we repeated the dance steps of the sky-bursters in the centre of sacred spaces doused with holy water.

We were without embarrassment, sacrificial and exhibitionistic.

We made music, we embraced and our movements sang in the same language:

I've met you before.

I will be you again. I am you every time I return to the land of the sky-bursters.

Then we became strange, and then strangers.

When we were old,

We became terrifying, mysterious and the tears we cried to each other smelled like fresh *niu*.

The anger that we had practiced so well was housed in a museum in Honolulu, and then in Seattle, in the "Pacific Collection."

We were sea turtles ensnared by our own taste for *esi* skins and we had no secrets.

Our names belonged to us, to each other; our humanity belonged to us, to each other

To the NGOs, to their donors, to the volunteers.

Our story housed revolutions and our colours meshed like the fine weave of baskets sold for tourists.

Our knowledge was not elusive, our medicine was not erudite.

Without form we whisper

I've met you before.

I will be you again.

10.5.1 Poem Development

With this final poem, I hope to convey the hopeful nature of my dissertation. I wrote this poem as a reflection on my first poem, "Samoa: the things we see in each other." I feel that the relationship between Indigenous and Western cultures is not unlike a relationship between a couple, one that fights, one that creates, one that recognizes possibility and limitations in one another... except that this particular couple happens to be inter-racial, bi-cultural, and operates from a position resting on a plethora of different perspectives. In terms of education, the education system and education revolution, if I can somehow, in the next few phrases encompass the weight and enormity of those titles/labels, I think that what we may perceive to be changes in them are really cyclical and generational transformations; we expect there to be upheavals as the ties of globalisation draw us ever closer, and sometimes the upheavals bring a sense of relief, but if these upheavals and transformations stop, then we are not challenging and teaching each other how to grow. Education, learning, knowledge, journeys, experience, these are a part of life and death, inextricable from one another, and sometimes intangible, but for a moment, these different ethereal and corporeal aspects join together, touch and communicate.

Appendices

A.1 Rotaract Survey

**All responses are anonymous and the data will not harm you in any way. Survey results will be used in Acacia Cochise's dissertation for The University of Canterbury.

1) Age

2) Level of education

Primary Secondary Tertiary

3) Name(s) of school(s) attended in Samoa

4) Name(s) of school(s) attended outside Samoa

5) Occupation

6) Why did you choose to work in Samoa?

7) Personal career goals

8) Why did you join Rotaract and why do you support the club?

9) What does Rotaract mean to you?

10) To you, what is the most important past/present/future project in Rotaract, why?

11) Are there problems in education in Samoa? (if yes, what?)

11) What do you hope for in the future of education in Samoa?

A.2 Rotaract Samoa Career Day Information

27th April, 2011

TO: Principal

Dear Sir/Madam,

2011 Career Shadow Day

The Rotaract Club of Apia is excited to inform you of our Career Shadow Day commencing on the May 17th to 19th, 2011. The goal of the event is to expose youth from rural areas to professional opportunities in the workforce and inspire them to see themselves becoming a young professional. Last year, 15 year 12 students were matched up with young professionals and shadowed them for one day of work. It was a great success for both the students and the professionals and we look forward to growing the event this year.

We invite your school to nominate three (3) students to participate. We urge you to nominate students with great potential for success in life, even if they have a mixture of academic ability. Please make a list of their names, contact phone numbers, and have them list three areas of professional interest. See use the attached student nomination form for more information.

To confirm both your School's participation and nominations or simply for more information, please contact Mr. Situfu Salesa on 7702238 or Blakey Larsen on 7262122 or myself on 7778844. Please confirm participation before Friday, May 13th. A scheduled program of activities and list of expectations of participants is attached.

We look forward to your favorable response.



Savave Sapolu
President
Rotaract Club of Apia

Career Shadow Day Program

Tuesday May 17, 2011

Invited to Attend: Students, Professionals, Principals, Media

Venue: Samoa Tourism Fale

- 2:00 Opening Ceremonies
- 2:30 Pairing up of Students and Professionals
- Exchange contact information
- Discuss workplace etiquette (dress code, arrival time, lunch plan)
- 3:15 Close

*Students should arrive 1 hour early at 1:00 pm

Wednesday May 18, 2011

Invited to Attend: Students and Professionals

Venue: Organisation where the professional works

- 9:00 am
- to Students shadow their young professional in the workplace.
- 4:30 pm

Friday May 19, 2011

Invited to Attend: Only the Students

Venue: Samoa Tourism Fale

- 9:00 am
- to Debrief with students
- 11:00 am

Student Nomination Form

	Student's Name	Contact Phone Number	Areas of Interest
1.			1. 2. 3.
2.			1. 2. 3.
3.			1. 2. 3.

***Areas of interest could be **anything the students are interested in**. For example, environment, non-governmental organisations, computers, graphic design, medicine, business, social work, finance, development, etc. Any interest is acceptable.

A.3 SIT Sample Semester Calendar

February 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2 3-5 Students Arrive in HNL 6:00 Welcome & Dinner at Kit 'n Kitchen	3 9-10 Welcome 10:30-12 Program Overview & Expectations Lunch at UH 1:30-3:00 Hawaiian History Explorations in Honolulu	4 10:30 Group Meeting 11:00 Bus to Bishop Museum 1:00-3:00 Bishop Museum Drop-off activities 6:30 Dinner in Waikiki
5	6 8:30- 9 Check-in 9:00-10:15 Prehistory & Archaeology 10:30-12:00 Samoana Video Lunch 1:00-3:00 Intro to Samoan Language 6:30-9:00 Group dinner & <i>photo sharing</i>	7 8:30-9:00 Check- in & Book discussion 9:00-10:15 Video: Act of War 10:30-12:00 Current Issues in Hawaii Pizza lunch with Pacific Island students 2:00-3:30 Visit and work Activities at Kanewai lo'i Free evening	8 8:30 Check-in 9:00-10:30 Social Change in the Pacific 11:00-12:30 Globalization in the Pacific Lunch 12:30-2:30 Lunch 2:30-4:00 Program & Syllabi review 7-9 Group dinner	9 8:30-10:00 Economics and Development 10:30-12:00 Regional Issues Lunch 1:30-3:00 Stock expressions/ Closure and prep For Samoa Free evening	10 5:00 am Depart for airport 8:10 Flight to Samoa Cross INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE	11 12:35 Arrive Samoa Settle in / Lunch 2:00 Drop-offs In Apia 5:00 Meet at Seawall Dinner at Seafood
12 8:15-1:00 Church & Welcome Toonai at ADs FREE AFTERNOON	13 8:30 Check-in 9:00-11:00 Language 11:15-12:15 <i>Traditional Samoan Society</i> FREE TIME	14 8:30 Check-in 9:00-11:00 Language 11:15-12:15 <i>Learning Styles</i> Lunch 1:00 Village Drop-offs 5:00 Processing Drop-offs	15 8:30-10:00 Language 10:30-1:00 Health & Nutrition Activities & Meal Free time 8-10 Land has Eyes	16 8:30 Check-in 9:00-10:00 Religion & Culture 10:00-12:00 Language Lunch 2:00-3:30 <i>Health Orientation</i>	17 8:30 Check-in 9-12:00 USP Orientation Lunch 1:00-3:00 Apia tour / Visit To RLS Museum Hike to Mt. Vaea (optional) Dinner at USP	18 FREE
19 FREE	20 8:30 Check-in 9:00-11:00 Language 11:30-12:30 <i>Key Elements of the Faasamoa</i> Lunch 1:30-2:30 Ethnicity & the Anthropologist 2:30 -3:30 Village Prep & FSS Task <u>Hawaii Reaction Paper due</u>	21 8:30 Check-in & Green Banana 9:00-11:00 Language 11:30-12:30 <i>Education Overview</i> Lunch 1:30-2:30 Survey Planning <u>DIE journal check</u> Dinner at USP	22 8:30 Check-in & Nacirema 9-11:00 Language 11:15-12:15 Discussion: Emma's PSS: 2:00-3:00 <i>Women and Gender</i> Dinner Research time	23 8:30 <u>Issues Update 1/ draft Survey due</u> 9:00-11:00 Language 11:15-12:15 The Role of Oral Traditions Lunch 1-2:00 <i>Girl in the Moon Circle</i> Research time	24 8:30 Check-in 9:00-11:00 Language Exam 11:00-12:00 Final village prep <u>Mini-Research Paper due</u> FREE AFTERNOON No dinner at USP	25 Travel to Lotofaga Ava ceremony Settle in with families

March 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26 Feb	27 Feb 8-9 Check-in 9:00-11:00 Language 11:00-12:00 Village Economics: Lunch 1:30- 2:30 Weaving activity 2:30-3:30 Fiafia practice	28 Feb 8:00-10:00 Language 10:00-12:00 Umu Making & Food Preparation Lunch 2:00-3:00 Siva practice	29 Feb Family morning 2:00 Check-in at Jackie's 3-4:30 Prep For lessons 4:30-5:30 Fiafia practice	1 8-10 School Visit 10:30 Debrief 11-12:30 Lang 2:00-3:00 Lang Gift Giving / Fiafia practice <u>Lang journal check</u> \	2 8-9 Check-in 9-11:00 Language 11:30-12:00 Fiafia Lunch Research afternoon 6:30-9:30 Farewell & Fiafia	3 8:00-11:00 Group visit to Plantation Visit to Fuipisia Falls Final afternoon With families
4 Church/toonai and day with families Return to USP	5	6	7 8-10 Village Study planning & individual Discussions 10:30-11:30 Visit to farm 1:30-3:00 Politics, Matai & Change Dinner at USP	8 8:00-10:00 <u>Village Study Presentations</u> 8:30 <u>Issues Update 2</u> 9:00 Current Issues in Religion 10-12 Lang Lunch Study afternoon Dinner at USP	9 8:30 <u>Language Exam 2 & Lang Interviews</u> <u>Village essay due</u> 10:30-11:30 Environmental Issues 1:00 leave for Savaii 3 Village DIES due	10 FREE DAY AT TANU BEACH
11 FREE Trip to Falealupo (Optional) Jackie to Savaii 8pm <i>Nafanua</i> discussio	12 8:30-12:30 Geology of Samoa Lava field visits Pm Information Gathering activities 6-7 Discussion: Tourism, Culture and Change	13 9:00 Leave Tanu/ lunch at Salelologa 1:00 Tapa Making demo Swim at Aganoa Settle into Safua 6:00 Book reviews	14 9:00-3:00 Coastal Features & visit To Blowholes 6-7 Discussion: <i>Current Issues</i> Farewell to Safua	15 9:00 Hike to Tafua Crater Swim and at Olemoe Lunch at Uncle Bills 2:00 Ferry to Upolu	16 10:30 -12:30 Savaii Review/ Research Seminar: Ethics and Methods 1:30-4:30 Mini-ISP planning and/ or Info Gathering Activities/	17 FREE
18	19 8:30-10 Lang 10:30-11:30 11:30 <u>ISP Reviews</u> Lunch Pm Information Gathering	20 8:30-11:30 Lang & Writing Abstracts 2 groups x 1 hour <u>Mini- ISP Research</u>	21 8:30-11:30 Lang & Analyzing Surveys 2 groups x 1 hour <u>Mini- ISP Research</u>	22 8:30-11:30 Lang 2 groups x 1 hour <u>Mini- ISP Research</u>	23 8:30-10:30 Lang 2 groups x 1 hour 10:30-12:00 <u>Mini-ISPs I</u> Lunch 1-3 <u>Mini-ISPs</u>	24 FREE
25	26 8:30-10:30 Lang 2 groups x 1 hour 10:30-11:30 Migration and Global Change 11:30-12:00 Prep for A Samoa <u>Written ISP Declaration & Abstract due</u>	27 10:30-12:00 Video: A Chief In Two Worlds <u>*Savaii language Essay & ALL Worksheets due</u> <u>*Theme essay due</u>	28 8:30-10:30 Language Exam #2 & Interviews 3:00PM Travel to Am Samoa Arrive on 27th	28 9:00 Travel to American Samoa Arrive on 28 Intro/ Overview of American Samoa Lunch at ASCC 1:30-3:30 Art Workshop 4:00-5:00 Session with Sia Figiel Overnight with Samoan student	29 9-10:15 Search for Common Values 10:30-12:30 Archaeology of American Samoa Lunch 1:30-3:00 Pacific Ethnography with Micah 4:00-5:20 Educational Exchange	30 7:30-12 Archaeological Visits to Vatia 12:30-1:30 Evals & closure 2:00-3:30 Shopping time 3:30 Check in 4:30 Return to Upolu

April 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 <i>Daylight Savings time End</i> <i>Turn clock Back</i> Palm Sunday	2 10:30-11:30 11:30-12 Prep for Fiji Lunch <i>Research time</i> <u>Amerika Samoa Language essay due</u>	3 10:30-11:30 Film: <i>Squatters in Fiji</i> Lunch 1:30-3:00 NGO's and Issues in Samoa (SUNGO)	4 10:30-11:30 Discussion <i>Aid & Development</i> Lunch 1:30- 3:30 Aid Donor visit	5 11-12 Film: <i>Bittersweet Hope</i> Lunch 1:30-3:00 Meeting The MDG's (UNDP) <i>Race For Rights</i> and final prep for Fiji	6 Good Friday 8:30-9 <u>Issues Update #4</u> 9:00-11:00 <u>Fiji Reports</u> 12:00 Leave For airport 4:00 Arrive Nadi Overnight at Sandalwood	7 Free morning 11:00 Travel To Abaca
8 Easter Sunday Morning With families 1:00 pm Hike to Water Fall	9 Easter Mon Holiday 8:00 Leave Abaca meet Prem/ Shopping time In Nadi Lunch Travel to Suva Dinner at Peking	10 8 :30 Welcome 9:00-11:00 Sessions at OCAC 11:00-1:00 Lunch and Book store visit Free afternoon	11 9:00-10:15 Ethnic Issues 10:30-12:00 Environment & Development Lunch at Dolphins 1:30-3 Fiji Museum Market visits	12 9-11 Poverty Lecture & visit To squatter Settlement Afternoon In Suva 3 pm Leave Suva For Indo Fijian Family stay in Kulukulu	13 7 am -11 Sand Dunes visit/time with Families Free afternoon	14 Free morning with Families 11am Travel to Natadola Beach 3pm To Nadi/ Relax Sandalwood 11pm Check into flight
15 4:35 am Arrive in Samoa/	16 Study, assignment Completion & ISP Planning 5-7 Review/ Discussion: <i>Tales of the Tikongs</i> <u>Final DIEs & Excursion Reaction paper due</u>	17 9:00-9:30 <u>Issues Update #5</u> 9:30-10:30 Discussion <i>Looking to The Future</i> 10:30-11:00 PSS Closure STUDY AFTERNOON	18 9-11 <u>PSS Final</u> 12:30-2:30 Review of ISP Topics/ ISP Logistics & prep <u>All assignments due</u> <u>Fiji lang essay;</u>	19 ISP Period Begin Office hours Jackie Tue-Thu 8-10 Wed 4-6	20	21 Past students' Advice: Plan an outing or two for weekends during ISP
22	23	24 <u>Final Proposal & Tentative Outline Due</u>	2	26	27	28

May 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29	30	1 Work Journal Review with AD	2 Work Journal Review with AD AD	3 Work Journal Review wit AD AD <i>Group Meeting</i>	4	5
6	7	8	9 Final review/ & Draft to advisor Final day to submit drafts to AD	10	11 WRITTEN ISPS DUE NO LATER THAN 5 pm	12
13	14 9:30-12:00 Oral presentation I (4) 1:00-3:30 Oral presentation (4)	15 9:30-12:00 Oral presentation I (4) 1:00-3:30 Oral presentation (4) <u>Work Journals due</u>	16 9:30 Outing to Piula & farewell visit to Lotofaga Option: overnight At Lalomanu/ Namua <u>Eval comments &Suggested ISP Proposal due</u>	17 FREE	18 FREE UNTIL 4 PM 4:00-6:00 Re-entry session At Jackie's FINAL DINNER 9 pm Leave For airport 11:30 pm Flight to HNL Arrive Friday am	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

A.4 Teach For America Culturally Relevant Teaching Discussion and Activity Guide

Agenda for Discussion

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Use of Oral Tradition in Classrooms

Learning Outcomes:

Teachers will be able to articulate what culturally responsive teaching is and what it could look like in their individual contexts, given their own identities and the identities of their students.

Teachers will consider how they can discuss their identities and their students' identities in class to create an affirming space for all; teachers will brainstorm new ways to do this with narrative.

Teacher's Activity:

1. Read "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" by Gloria Ladson-Billings
2. Participate in group discussion on culturally responsive teaching using questions on the worksheet.

Discussion Assignment - Teacher Worksheet

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Usage of Oral Tradition/Storying in Classrooms

Part I: Session preparation

Read “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” by Gloria Ladson-Billings.

Consider the short and long term goals you have for yourself and your classroom through developing a deeper culturally responsive teaching awareness.

Part II: Discussion

Be prepared to discuss the questions:

What is culturally responsive teaching?

Why does culturally responsive teaching matter?

What is your role as a culturally responsive non-native teacher, and how should you conduct yourself in and outside of class?

How will you affirm native and non-native student identities within a bicultural or single-culture setting?

How can you help students be their “authentic self?”

Expectations for discussion:

Participation

Peer-respect

Part III: Follow-up assignment from discussion

Find time during class to identify and discuss, with your students:

1. Identify and discuss your expectations of yourself as a teacher, class expectations of you, your expectations of them and their expectations of themselves.
2. Share experiences from your/their daily lives including cultural experiences, traditions, ceremonies or stories
3. Discuss the importance of sharing experiences and stories

Teaching Sensitivities/Considerations:

The teacher should be aware of:

The family structure of your student, who's at home?

The median household income of your student

Collect information about how involved the student is with their Indigenous culture outside of school. (It's important to NOT assume they already are or are even interested as this might alienate the student from participating with classroom activities, or put them on the spot if this student is in the minority.) this would be another step in the lesson plan

Questions for Facilitator to consider:

How can one introduce the topic of oral tradition/personal narrative/storying as an inclusive activity in which both native and non-native students can participate ?.

How can students involve the community in their lesson planning?

What ways can you involve the community with students?:

Suggested activities.

Assign an activity for students to contribute/involve/interact themselves in their community in a way in which they haven't before e.g. volunteering with a local food bank or shelter, raise money as a class to donate to classroom need or a community need, invite native speakers, or visit campuses or course that involve native/Indigenous pedagogy in their coursework etc.

e.g. Invite native college students to lead sessions on the importance of higher education and ways to acknowledge and their Indigenous identity within college settings etc.

Additional Resources for Classroom activities:

1) Try these lessons:

<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lpeveryday/>

<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lpperformart/>

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/resources/firstnationsliterature/oraltradition.html>

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/4/84.04.05.x.html#i>

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:FYVXvYF1xPgJ:www.historylink.org/_content/education/downloads/Oral%2520History%2520Curriculum.pdf+oral+tradition+classroom+activities&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=nz&client=safari

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